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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Laura Mellinger for the Master of Arts in
History presented February 15, 1985.

Title: The First Wandering Preachers

APPROVED BY MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:

[REDACTED]
Susan C. Karant-Nunn, Chairman

[REDACTED]
Ann Weikel

[REDACTED]
Michael F. Reardon

[REDACTED]
Baxter D. Wilson

This thesis attempts to trace the origins of the wandering preachers who appeared around 1100 in Europe. These were men who took it upon themselves to wander through towns and countryside, preaching a variety of messages wherever they found an audience. They are of interest in prefiguring St Francis' style, and in exemplifying the ramification of voluntary poverty styles which formed their context. They are also important for their central role in various movements of popular piety.

The earliest preachers mentioned were active primarily in the area of northwest France. Robert of Arbrissel began his itinerant

preaching here in 1096. He seems to have exerted a wide influence, and a number of others are named as following his example. Following these men's activities, four other figures are named as engaging in wandering apostolates in southern France and the Low Countries beginning in the second decade of the twelfth century. Contemporary documents, particularly saints' lives and letters, may be drawn upon to characterize this development.

The expansion of voluntary poverty styles which formed these preachers' context took shape mainly as a proliferation of variations on the style of hermit and canon. The wandering preachers seem particularly to have come from among the hermits, though also exhibiting ties to other forms of the life of spiritual poverty. Most strikingly, evidence suggests that a number of hermits and preachers were fugitives from traditional Benedictine monasteries. The major figures named by my sources all came from positions within the church.

While his immediate precursors were the preachers of the First Crusade, in developing this style as a way of life with a broader message Robert drew on certain general sources of influence. These include the idea of the imitatio Christi and the penitential pilgrimage, and the emphasis among canons on doing the "work of Martha." The adoption of this style by other churchmen may suggest a certain climate of both fervor and restlessness within the church which is also suggested by the careers of a number of participants in the general movement toward voluntary poverty. The fact of the itinerant preachers' origins within the church is striking in itself. As evidence indicates that the preachers were often former regular religious, this

phenomenon is also significant as a means of modified monastic values and teachings having been taught among the general populace.

THE FIRST WANDERING PREACHERS

by

LAURA MELLINGER

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH:

The members of the Committee approve the thesis of Laura
Mellinger presented February 15, 1985.

[REDACTED]
Susan C. Karant-Nunn, Chairman

[REDACTED]
Ann Weikel

[REDACTED]
Michael F. Reardon

[REDACTED]
Baxter D. Wilson

APPROVED:

[REDACTED]
Bernard V. Burke, Head, Department of History

[REDACTED]
Jim F. Heath, Dean of Graduate Studies and Research

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

At the end of the eleventh century Europe witnessed the appearance of wandering preachers. These individuals took it upon themselves to wander through towns and countryside, preaching a variety of messages wherever they found an audience. They are of interest in prefiguring the style of St Francis, as well as in exemplifying the ramification of voluntary poverty styles which formed their context. They are also important for their central role in contemporary movements of popular piety which ranged from calls to loving and prayerful community, to crusades and pogroms. This paper will explore the conditions and characteristics of these preachers' emergence. It will first examine the expansion of the lifestyle of voluntary poverty. It will then seek to characterize the background, origins, and emphasis of the wandering preachers themselves.

I have found represented two major scholarly viewpoints concerning the spread of voluntary poverty. The first is outlined by Lester K. Little in Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe.¹ As the title implies, Little sees this phenomenon primarily

¹ Lester K. Little, Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978) 267 pages. This viewpoint is presented also in his article written jointly with Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Social Meaning in the Monastic and Mendicant Spiritualities," Past & Present May 1974: 4-32.

as a reaction to the growth of a money-based, profit-oriented economy. He defines this system's predecessor as a "gift economy," in which ". . . goods and services are exchanged without having specific, calculated values assigned to them. Prestige, power, honour, and wealth are all expressed in the spontaneous giving of gifts" The focus of this transaction is upon the act of exchanging rather than upon the item exchanged.²

Little indicates the transition from gift economy to profit economy as raising "acute problems involving impersonalism, money, and moral uncertainty." These resulted from the social complexity of the urban environment, the effect of the spread of money transactions upon various human activities and relationships, and the "obsolescence of prevailing Christian morality." He believes that a spiritual crisis caused by a "disjuncture between socio-economic change and resistance to adaptation" led to the response of various styles of voluntary poverty. The varieties of response are represented by monks, hermits, regular canons, "various groups of pious laymen," and friars.³

Little's theory raises certain questions. One sort of question is raised by the basic assumption implied in his approach. It concerns the adequacy of treating a spiritual response exclusively as a reaction to socio-economic conditions. Another sort of question is raised by the inadequacy of this theory in accounting for cases in which a developing economy has not provoked a similar reaction, or in which voluntary poverty has been adopted under different economic

² Little 4.

³ Little 19, xi.

circumstances.

The second major viewpoint on this subject is outlined in Tadeusz Manteuffel's Birth of a Heresy; The Adepts of Voluntary Poverty in the Middle Ages.⁴ This view presents the spread of voluntary poverty as arising out of the conditions of the Gregorian Reform. Manteuffel states,

The evangelical precept recommending to the faithful the renunciation of worldly goods in order to open for themselves the paths leading to perfection, experienced a resurgence of favor within the climate of the struggle undertaken for the reform of the Church. 5

Manteuffel draws on certain works of European scholarship which I have not been able to consult. Especially, he makes reference to major works by Herbert Grundmann and Ernst Werner. However, Manteuffel implies that his basic interpretation agrees with theirs.⁶

The general setting of this view lies in recent scholarship concerning the era of reform, David Knowles explains that though previously historians treated reform efforts almost entirely in terms of "the contest between empire and papacy," recent scholarship has

⁴ Tadeusz Manteuffel, Naissance d'une hérésie: Les adeptes de la pauvreté volontaire au Moyen Age, trad. Anna Posner (Paris: Mouton, 1970) 113 pages.

⁵ Manteuffel 11.

⁶ Manteuffel 11, n. 1. He cites Herbert Grundmann, Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter (Hildesheim, 1961) and Ernst Werner, Die gesellschaftlichen Grundlagen der Klosterreform im XI Jahrhundert (Berlin, 1953). These scholars are recommended also by A. Vauchez in "La pauvreté volontaire au Moyen Age," Annales Nov.-Dec. 1970: 1566, n. 1. He states that the fundamental works on the theme of voluntary poverty are that by Grundmann which has been mentioned, and E. Werner, Pauperes Christi: Studien zu Sozial-Religiösen Bewegungen im Zeitalter des Reformpapsttums (Leipzig, 1956).

broadened this view.

It is only within the last fifty years that this great dispute . . . has been seen more correctly as one aspect of a vast movement of moral, disciplinary and administrative reform affecting the whole of society and not only the papacy and the clergy. ⁷

Both Knowles and Christopher Dawson set out views of the reform movement as beginning with the monastic reforms of the tenth century and taking on wider scope in the eleventh. During this century individuals from reformed monasteries joined with other churchmen in efforts toward more general reform, especially in Lorraine and Burgundy. When the Lorraine reformer Leo IX was raised to the papacy, he initiated a papal leadership role for this movement. He brought to Rome such other Lorraine reformers as Hugh Candidus, Udo of Toul, Frederick of Lorraine, and Humbert of Moyenmoutier. ⁸

A major emphasis of the new papacy's program was the reform of the clergy. This centered particularly on the issues of simony, which was defined as heresy, and of nicolaism, which was viewed as a violation of genuine clerical purity. This emphasis also took shape in an attempt to institute the common life among certain orders of the clergy, especially canons. ⁹ Walter Ullmann characterizes Hildebrand's

⁷ David Knowles with Dimitri Obolensky, The Middle Ages, The Christian Centuries 2 (New York: Paulist, 1969) 165.

⁸ Knowles 165-71; Christopher Dawson, "Monastic Reform and Christian Culture," The Gregorian Epoch: Reformation, Revolution, Reaction?, ed. Schafer Williams, Problems in European Civilization (Boston: Heath, 1964) 47-54.

⁹ Knowles 169-71; Augustin Fliche, La réforme grégorienne et la reconquête chrétienne (1057-1123), vol. 8 of Histoire de l'église depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours, ed. Augustin Fliche et Victor Martin, 21 vols. (N.p.: Bloud & Gay, 1950) 15-16, 28-29, 32, 227.

thought in a way that may be taken as suggestive of the broadest intent of the reform movement. He believes that Hildebrand held as his sense of purpose the implementation of "justice" in society. "What was needed was the accommodation of this society to Christian laws and maxims. . . . Justice in its Christian clothing was to inspire the law ordering society" Knowles and Dawson agree with Ullmann's view.¹⁰

This viewpoint further proposes the sort of widespread public involvement that would allow major repercussions to be felt within society. Dawson claims,

For the first time in the history of the West an attempt was made to enlist public opinion on either side, and a war of treatises and pamphlets was carried on, in which the most fundamental questions concerning the relation of Church and state and the right of resistance to unjust authority were discussed exhaustively. ¹¹

Ullmann asserts that the papacy employed a policy of allying itself with relatively less privileged social groups. Of the Lateran decree of 1059 forbidding attendance at the services of priests living in concubinage, he states that the synodists' intent was to ally themselves

. . . with social groups who belonged neither to the class of priests nor to that of the land-owning lay lords; by proclaiming a strike on the part of laymen, the papacy attacked the wealthy who conferred the ecclesiastical offices and benefices. ¹²

He further notes papal support of the Pataria, a Milanese

¹⁰ Walter Ullmann, A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages (London: Methuen, 1972) 148-49; Knowles 174; Dawson 52.

¹¹ Dawson 53.

¹² Ullmann 143-44.

movement led by certain clerics which fought to reform clerical morals. Ullmann characterizes it as of the "lower and lowest classes," and states that it was "a movement at once economic, social and political, directed against the wealthy and influential forces in the city." He also mentions the dispatching to them of a banner signifying the Petrine blessing.¹³

He takes this as an example of a more general practice:

The tenor of the papal and curial approach to the urban masses in Italy was once more an implicit attack on the conservative, traditionalist forces in the towns themselves By harnessing this mass movement to its own programme, the papacy took a step of a veritably revolutionary character.

Ullmann believes that it was the combination of such alliances as these and the relations established with princes that enabled the papacy to play a central role in European society.¹⁴

It is against the background of this direction in scholarship that Manteuffel presents the climate of church reform as the central condition for the spread of voluntary poverty. He proposes three specific routes through which it spread. He first mentions "individuals who went much further in their ideas of reform," choosing the eremitic lifestyle. These include Nilus of Rosano, Saint Romuald, Saint John Gualbert, and Peter Damian. He notes their popularity and influence, and their function in reviving ancient traditions.¹⁵

As the second route, Manteuffel proposes a splinter group from

¹³ Ullmann 144-45.

¹⁴ Ullmann 144-47.

¹⁵ Manteuffel 12-13.

the Pataria. In their disillusionment with the results of reform efforts, they began to seek a new basis for the Christian life. They moved in the direction of a Gospel-inspired style of poverty.¹⁶ As a third route he mentions the movement to revive the institution of canons regular. He notes that communities were established by reforming prelates. They included a new type conforming to the principles of primitive Christian communities. He then discusses the variety of poverty styles that comprised the expansion of this ideal. With the canons, these included types of monk and hermit, as well as the itinerant preachers. He also mentions communities of laymen who placed themselves under the direction of the monks of Hirsau in Franconia, about whose lifestyle little is known.¹⁷

A. Vauchez comments on Manteuffel's work. He agrees with Manteuffel's basic viewpoint, while pointing to more specific ties with the central reform movement and disputing the role of a splinter group from the Pataria. He states that there is "no text which reveals an aspiration among the Patarines toward voluntary poverty."¹⁸

While Manteuffel accounts for the hermits as individuals who drew out implications of reformist ideas, Vauchez traces a line of thought to account for this. He states that between Humbert of Moyenmoutier and Paschal II, one sees a progressive realization of the "fundamental implications" of the reform struggle. The battle against simony led reformers to the cause of lay investiture. This raised the

¹⁶ Manteuffel 23.

¹⁷ Manteuffel 25-38.

¹⁸ Vauchez 1568.

question of the proper relationship between the church and secular powers, and more basically that of the proper "modalities of its presence in the world."

One sort of answer to this question was realized eschatology: the building of God's kingdom here on earth. This answer was the successor to Gregory VII's approach. The other sort of answer was radical poverty, as "the only way not to fall back into the contradiction between the ideal and the life actually lived."¹⁹

In accounting for the canonical movement, Vauchez stresses the role of the papacy. This is based upon its efforts to institute the apostolic life among the clergy in the second half of the century:

Gregory VII failed in his efforts to impose this manner of life upon the clergy as a whole but the movement met with very great success among wide circles of people: canons regular, lay groupings such as those which formed around Hirsau, Cistercians, Carthusians, etc. 20

In accordance with these suggestions, this discussion of the spread of voluntary poverty will begin with an examination of the viewpoint presented by these scholars. However, it will focus more particularly on these movements' relationship to traditional monasticism. Knowles states that

The period of European history between the death of St Benedict (c. 548) and that of St Bernard (1153) has become known as 'the monastic age' . . . monks of all kinds, whether regarded as individuals or in community, were an integral feature of continental and insular society, which they affected on every level, spiritual, intellectual, liturgical, artistic, administrative and economic, moulding its character and shaping its development. 21

¹⁹ Vauchez 1570-71.

²⁰ Vauchez 1569.

It was also primarily within this institution that poverty was preserved as an ideal, prior to the growth of the eremitic and canonical movements.

The spread of voluntary poverty will set the context for the emergence of the itinerant preachers. The inspiration for discussion of them is drawn from a scattering of sources. Several of these figures are common subjects for studies on popular heresy. Histories of monasticism often mention Robert of Arbrissel's preaching. In his study of millenarian movements, Norman Cohn notes that "revolutionary movements of the poor, headed by messiahs or living saints . . . occurred with increasing frequency from the end of the eleventh century onward." He describes them as generally following a pattern of beginning as "freelance preachers devoted to the apostolic way of life," and then verging into messianic pretensions. He also mentions their role in the First Crusade and the accompanying pogroms.²²

Bede K. Lackner, discussing the background of Cîteaux, briefly discusses the

. . . emergence during the second half of the eleventh century of itinerant preachers, mostly from the ranks of the hermits. . . . Their model was Christ, the apostles and the Fathers Moving from place to place, they engaged in preaching and cared for the sick, the poor and the needy. ²³

Those he names are figures from within the orthodox monasticism of

²¹ Knowles 117.

²² Norman Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford UP, 1970) 41-53, 61-70.

²³ Bede K. Lackner, The Eleventh-Century Background of Cîteaux, Cistercian Studies Series 8 (Washington, D.C.: Consortium, 1972) 150-51.

the late eleventh to early twelfth centuries.²⁴

Vaucher characterizes "the hermits and the 'Wanderprediger' who multiplied in the West between 1080 and 1120" as those who, whether orthodox or heretical, were inspired by the example of Christ.²⁵ Manteuffel also mentions them as particularly clear examples of voluntary poverty, living from "what they obtained from their audience and from their fervent adepts."²⁶

These sources point to the appearance of wandering preachers as a prominent aspect of European society near the end of the eleventh century. They also point to the varied consequences of these preachers' activities. A general treatment of them may perhaps be given in certain German works.²⁷ This discussion will draw on various sources in an attempt to set out the origins of itinerant preaching.

²⁴ Lackner 151.

²⁵ Vaucher 1569, 1571.

²⁶ Manteuffel 31-37.

²⁷ Manteuffel (32, nn. 2, 4) cites Werner, Pauperes Christi and Johannes von Walter, Die ersten Wanderprediger Frankreichs (Leipzig, 1903) as sources for Robert of Arbrissel. Their titles imply some more general treatment.

CHAPTER II

THE SPREAD OF VOLUNTARY POVERTY

A major thrust of the spread of voluntary poverty was formed by a revival of the institution of canons regular. The results of Charlemagne's attempt to institute this way of life had declined, though Knowles notes that at certain points there were efforts to revive it. These efforts were renewed in the eleventh century with widespread results. It was at this point that the Rule of St Augustine began to be employed in these communities,¹ Though this Rule had its basis in one of the saint's letters, R. W. Southern points out that "until about the middle of the eleventh century nobody seems to have thought of it as a 'Rule' at all"²

Southern further states that this Rule's

. . . flexibility soon caused it to be adopted by many groups of clergy and laity on the fringes of organized religious life During the half-century from 1075 to 1125 new communities following the Rule of St Augustine appeared all over western Europe . . . and they exhibited every kind and mixture of customs.

Within this variety, he notes a polarization similar to that between eremitism and traditional Benedictine monasticism:

There was a 'severe' school of thought which insisted on

¹ David Knowles with Dimitri Obolensky, The Middle Ages, The Christian Centuries 2 (New York: Paulist, 1969) 190-91.

² R. W. Southern, Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages (New York: Penguin, 1970) 242.

rules of abstinence, silence, manual labour, and psalmody; and there was a 'broad' school which allowed the use of meat, denied the necessity of manual labour, and was content to rest its rule on the requirement that all things should be held in common. 3

This variety also took shape in the emphasis of many houses upon providing a particular social service. These included schools, hospitals, and places of refuge for the aged, pregnant women, lepers, and the blind.⁴ Knowles mentions that the variety of communities included urban foundations, as well as small communities adjacent to a founder's castle, and other small communities placed in what had been proprietary churches. There were both these less strict communities and other "more fully organized" ones. Knowles also suggests that "in general, the climate of the age and the example of other orders tended to 'monachise' the canons . . . and many of the larger houses became indistinguishable from houses of black monks"⁵

The role of the papacy in this revival is discussed by Augustin Fliche and touched upon by Knowles. This role began with a Lateran decree of 1059 calling for adoption of the common life by some of the clergy. Fliche remarks that this was part of Nicholas II's effort at their "moral reform." The pope decreed:

We have decided that clerics of those orders enumerated above who, in obedience to our predecessor, have maintained their chastity, ought, as is also fitting for truly pious clerics, to have near the churches for which they have been ordained, a common refectory, a common dormitory, and also to possess in common all which comes to them from the churches. We require

³ Southern 242.

⁴ Southern 248.

⁵ Knowles 192.

that they immediately apply themselves to bringing about the apostolic life, that is to say the common life. 6

The orders of clerics for whom this decree was intended included canons. This decree was renewed by Alexander II in 1063. "From this moment, many chapters reformed themselves and adopted monastic practices, notably in the north of France where the terms 'abbey of canons' (abbatia canonicorum) and 'congregation of canons' (congregatio canonicorum) spread" Fliche specifies Gregory VII's contribution to this movement as the publishing of a rule for the canons of Rome. However, it was particularly Urban II who encouraged the movement's growth. Under him, it underwent a "prodigious development."⁷ Knowles agrees with Fliche in seeing a rapid growth in this movement in the years following the Lateran decree.⁸

While adding details to the view presented by Vauchez, this leaves unanswered the question of how these papal decrees provoked such a wide response. Fliche's discussion of papal actions is limited to efforts toward reform of the clergy. Yet Southern's description emphasizes the wide and varied shape of this movement, and its inclusion of laymen as well as clergy. And Vauchez implies even wider influence than within the canonical revival.

Southern refers to a charter preamble in which Urban II compared monks and canons, setting out the analogy to the roles of Mary and

⁶ Quoted by Augustin Fliche, La réforme grégorienne et la reconquête chrétienne (1057-1123), vol. 8 of Histoire de l'église depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours, ed. Augustin Fliche et Victor Martin, 21 vols. (N.p.: Bloud & Gay, 1950) 28.

⁷ Fliche 227.

⁸ Knowles 191.

Martha. While monks abandoned earthly things for contemplation, canons made use of earthly things "with tears and almsgiving." The role of the canons was humbler, but not less necessary. At another point Southern comments that "modesty and service were two qualities which appealed to practical men in this period of rapid growth" ⁹

Southern also proposes another way in which the canons may have served as a response to certain needs. He states that

the social upheavals of the eleventh century had brought into secure positions in the feudal structure many new families, of modest means but with the instincts of great landlords. Like their betters they wanted that symbol of stability -- a religious house where they would be honoured as founders and patrons, and buried with decency in the midst of their family.

He cites examples to suggest that houses of canons were less expensive than monasteries, and so more easily within the means of such families. ¹⁰

This movement's function as a response to such needs more credibly accounts for it than do papal decrees alone. In addition, this description by Jean Leclercq suggests the importance of a variety of individual aspirations:

Cathedral chapters and colleges of clerics adopted the regular life, and when opposition prevented this reform a group would retire into solitude; in some places the canons had started as a hospital founded by penitents, often laymen, for the poor or the sick or travelers; on occasions hermit clerics came together to form a community, and were joined by laymen, sometimes by children and women too; gradually these latter -- conversae, sorores -- became nuns, either as an autonomous group or forming a double monastery of canons and nuns. ¹¹

⁹ Southern 242-43.

¹⁰ Southern 245-48.

¹¹ Jean Leclercq, François Vandenbroucke, and Louis Bouyer,

The gap between papal actions and the diverse phenomenon these sources suggest is a point that requires further research.

These diverse communities of canons may be characterized as in some ways following a monastic model, and in other ways reacting against it. Lackner points out that the call for clergy to observe chastity and the common life was a decision that they should live like monks. He further comments that the canons' fully observed vita communis "meant the replacement of the mitigations of Aachen and a greater approximation to the Benedictine ideals."¹² Little asserts that "the reformed styles of the canonical life . . . all involved to some extent a common liturgical life, a point on which the canonical spirituality was clearly derivative of the monastic."¹³ According to Leclercq, there gradually appeared among the canons regular, "as in the Benedictine tradition, ordines and consuetudines defining and completing the three documents; many of these collections owed much to the Rule of St Benedict and to monastic observances."¹⁴ The "three documents" are the versions of St Augustine's Rule.

Yet it is equally clear that canons tended in some ways to choose alternatives to the monastic model. This is seen particularly

The Spirituality of the Middle Ages, trans. The Benedictine Monks of Holme Eden Abbey, Carlisle (New York: Seabury, 1968) 137.

¹² Bede K. Lackner, The Eleventh-Century Background of Cîteaux, Cistercian Studies Series 8 (Washington, D.C.: Consortium, 1972) 158, 160.

¹³ Lester K. Little, Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978) 106.

¹⁴ Leclercq et al. 137-38.

in their choice of an alternate rule, and of a generally greater orientation toward the "life of Martha." Southern comments that their "spontaneity, variety, and freedom of movement stand in striking contrast to the stability of the older monasteries."¹⁵ Knowles states that

the Austin canons in general remained the least austere, the least secluded and the most loosely organized of the regular orders, as it were the extreme left wing of the great phalanx in which the Carthusians and Camaldolese were on the extreme right. 16

Canons and hermits may be seen partly as modifications of the monastic model, though in opposite directions.

The eremitic revival began in the tenth century, and toward the end of the eleventh spread more widely. Lackner suggests that this revival had some basis in an older eremitic tradition derived from Byzantine contacts. The revival began with the appearance of a number of hermits in northern Italy. These included Nilus, Romuald, Simeon, Dominic of Foligno, and Vernerius.¹⁷ For the development of the eremitic revival, the most important of these was to be St Romuald (c. 952-1027). His importance within this movement was to result especially from his posthumous influence upon Peter Damian, as well as from his own work. He also presents an early example of a particular pattern that will recur within this discussion. This is the monk who left his monastery to become a hermit.

These examples are important in suggesting eremitism's ties to

¹⁵ Southern 242-43.

¹⁶ Knowles 192.

¹⁷ Lackner 146.

traditional Benedictine monasticism. Leclercq notes,

Already at the beginning of the eleventh century, Leo II, abbot of Nonantula and afterwards archbishop of Ravenna from 999 to 1004, had been obliged to write at length to some monks who had become hermits, to remind them of the sanctifying value of the cenobitic life 18

Born into a noble family of Ravenna, Romuald entered a nearby monastery at the age of twenty. Little's description implies that his subsequent departure was primarily a flight from a conspiracy against his life. This was due to a dispute with his brothers over his denunciation of their laxity. He states that after barely averting an early death, "Romuald fled Saint-Apollinaris and began to live as a hermit, sometimes alone and sometimes in the company of other hermits."¹⁹ Lackner, however, stresses Romuald's aspiration toward the eremitic life. He also states that Romuald spent the next few years in the company of a particular hermit. "Unable to satisfy his inborn love of solitude and self-discipline in the abbey, he joined a hermit named Marinus; with him he led the life of a wandering hermit in central and northern Italy for some four years."²⁰

Both agree that following this period, he found his way to a monastery in the Pyrenees. The abbot of this monastery allowed Romuald to live nearby as a hermit. During this time he studied "ancient monastic authors, especially Cassian." Little reports that upon his return to Italy, Romuald went to live in the salt marshes near Ravenna. However, Emperor Otto III appointed him as abbot of Saint-Appollinaris.

¹⁸ Leclercq et al. 128.

¹⁹ Little 71.

²⁰ Lackner 168.

"There followed a stormy, one-year abbacy, and then Romuald withdrew again to Pereum,"²¹

He then began his career as an organizer of the eremitic life in northern and central Italy. His major foundation was Camaldoli. This consisted of both an eremitic community and, down the hill from it, a cenobitic one. Lackner notes that the hermits observed a very strict interpretation of the Rule of St Benedict.²²

Peter Damian (c. 1007-1072) was also a native of Ravenna. Following a difficult childhood, he received an excellent education and began a career as a teacher. However, in about 1035 he entered the hermitage of Fonte Avellana. This came in resolution of a spiritual crisis, during which he had been particularly impressed by two hermits' story of Romuald.²³

Leclercq indicates that Damian viewed the eremitic life as an alternative and higher form of the religious life than that lived within traditional monasticism. It was the narrow and difficult way, while traditional monasticism presented a minimum level, a beginning. As models for this life, in one of his rules he held up the way of life described by Cassian, as well as the examples of Saints Anthony and Jerome.²⁴ In an early letter, the identity he specifies for himself and his fellow hermits is that of "pauper."²⁵

²¹ Little 71; Lackner 168.

²² Little 71; Lackner 168-71.

²³ Little 72.

²⁴ Jean Leclercq, *Saint Pierre Damien: Ermite et homme d'église*, *Uomini e Dottrine* 8 (Rome: Storia e Letteratura, 1960) 47.

²⁵ Petrus Damianus, *Ep. iii.2*, *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1844-64)

In 1043 Damian was elected prior of the Fonte Avellana community. Leclercq notes that it became the center of a sort of congregation of foundations of which Damian acted as the superior. While this helped assure the prosperity of Romualdian foundations included within the foundation, Damian also made a number of new foundations. J. P. Whitney comments that his renown as a spiritual guide brought in many new adherents, for whom additional houses were required. His foundations included San Severino, Gamugno, Acerata, Murciano, Suavicino, and Ocri.²⁶

Little calls Damian the "leading theorist and propagator" of the eremitic movement.²⁷ Leclercq notes that, building on the work of Romuald, Damian acted as theorist and organizer. "The role of Saint Peter Damian was to formulate the ideal, to draft the law."²⁸ It is the opinion of Louis Gougaud that "by the eulogies they composed on the eremitic life, saints and spiritual writers contributed greatly to impelling ascetics toward the mountains and the forests. St. Peter Damian contributed to this more than any other."²⁹ Leclercq notes the

CXLIV, 289; ". . . sed ego pauperculum locum ad regendum suscipiens, qui prius per memetipsum solummodo pauper extiti, nunc per tot pauper effectus sum"

²⁶ Leclercq, Pierre Damien 43-44; J. P. Whitney, Hildebrandine Essays (Cambridge: UP, 1932) 100-01.

²⁷ Little 75.

²⁸ Leclercq, Pierre Damien 62.

²⁹ Louis Gougaud, Ermîtes et reclus: Etudes sur d'anciennes formes de vie religieuse (Ligugé, France: Abbaye Saint-Martin, 1928) 42.

opinion of Damian's contemporary, Alberic of Monte Cassino:

He carries off the treasures of the Egyptians to construct a dwelling-place belonging to God, this man who reads the poets and the philosophers so that he may have more vigor with which to penetrate the mystery of the heavenly language. 30

Damian exercised his influence through his organization and leadership of foundations, through his voluminous writings, and through the prominent and vocal example he must have set within reform circles.

Following upon a period of papal decadence, a particularly low point was reached in 1032, three years before Damian began his life as a hermit. In this year Benedict IX was made pope. A boy of twelve, he was elevated to the papacy as a move in his family's power-plays and proved an especially decadent pope. In the words of William Cannon, he marked the papacy's "nadir of political and social ineffectiveness, moral degeneracy, unabashed vice, and spiritual impotence." In 1045, "weary even of the pretense of rule, he sold the tiara to the highest bidder." In this way Gregory VI acquired the papacy in an attempt to reform it.³¹

Leclercq notes that during these years Peter Damian most often resided at Fonte Avellana, but left it to help reform monasteries, attend synods, and speak with bishops and with popes; ". . . he was, in Italy, one of the most visible churchmen." Leclercq mentions a number of letters written during this period before Leo IX's accession, in which Damian urges churchmen toward reform. According to Leclercq,

³⁰ Leclercq, Pierre Damien 197.

³¹ William Ragsdale Cannon, History of Christianity in the Middle Ages: From the Fall of Rome to the Fall of Constantinople (New York: Abingdon, 1960) 141-42.

the three greatest evils he denounced were avarice, incontinence, and ignorance. He also wrote a letter to Hildebrand on meditation.³²

As efforts to reform the papacy gained greater success, Damian continued his close involvement. Leclercq states that at the accession of Clement II, the emperor commanded Damian to help the new pope with counsel. Damian attended Leo's council at Rome in 1049. While continuing his efforts toward reform by persuasion, in 1057 he began his official role within the reform papacy with Stephen IX's naming of him as cardinal-bishop of Ostia. He also served as papal legate, being sent to deal with the situation of the Pataria in Milan in 1059, the dispute between the bishop of Mâcon and the Abbey of Cluny in 1063, and the marriage problems of Emperor Henry IV in 1069.³³

While this dual involvement in church reform and the eremitic revival might seem to support the viewpoint of Vauchez and Manteuffel, his conversion to the eremitic life occurred before he began his reform efforts. It came as a resolution of his personal spirituality. His eremitism was thus not an extension of his reformist ideas. If anything, this example might suggest the opposite.

John Gualbert (c. 995-1073) is also mentioned in both connections. He presents a less distinct case, but its interpretation tends in the same direction. One of the ways in which his case is less distinct lies in his choice of a mixed lifestyle. Both Little and Lackner point out that he combined the eremitic and the cenobitic styles

³² Leclercq, Pierre Damien 65-69.

³³ Leclercq, Pierre Damien 65, 75; Little 72-73; Whitney 105.

at his monastery of Vallombrosa. Little states that "John's ideal was something of a reformed Benedictine life tempered with active church reform and St Romuald's eremiticism." According to Lackner, "Life at Vallombrosa was half cenobitic, half eremitic, with a purely contemplative interpretation of the Benedictine Rule." The difficulty in classifying this mixture is emphasized by Little's characterization of it as eremitic, and Lackner's as cenobitic. However, John clearly stressed the eremitic aspect in a way that presented a marked contrast to traditional monasteries. This is underlined by Little's description of one of John's actions;

When he learned that a rich man had entered one of Vallombrosa's monasteries in the old Benedictine way, by bringing his family fortune with him, John went there right away, asked to see the charter of donation, tore it up, and trampled on the shreds. 34

The other way in which John's case is less distinct lies in his tending toward both eremitism and reformism at roughly the same time. This is suggested in Little's description of the course of events in his life. Having been persuaded by a vision to enter a Benedictine monastery, he was later chosen by his brothers as abbot. However, the abbacy was sold by the Archbishop of Florence to a wealthy office-seeker. On the advice of a nearby hermit, John fought this decision, denouncing both the abbot and the archbishop as simoniacs before a town crowd. His efforts proving unsuccessful, he withdrew. He visited Camaldoli before going on to establish his particular style of religious life at Vallombrosa.³⁵

³⁴ Lackner 188; Little 76.

³⁵ Little 75-76.

John thus appears to have been impelled toward both eremitism and reformism by the same incident. His eremitism might further be interpreted as an extreme reaction to an experience centering on the reformist issue of simony. However, the sequence of events does not outline a prior involvement in church reform which evolved toward the extreme solution of the eremitic life. John's original vocation centering on a vision, and his choice of a hermit for advice, both point toward his movement toward eremitism as being impelled more by personal calling than by the development of reformist ideas.

Damian also serves Little as a major example to support his theory that voluntary poverty constituted primarily a reaction to socio-economic conditions attending the growth of a money economy. Little emphasizes Damian's discomfort concerning money. Damian's conversion to the eremitic life occurred during what appeared the beginning of a lucrative teaching career.

His biographer, John of Lodi, who was a personal companion in Peter's later years, said that Peter attracted many students and gained 'copious riches' from his work. But a crisis developed for this young man in his early to mid twenties, for he no longer could rely on the discipline of student life and seemed unable to deal with the freedom afforded him by his fees. The resolution of his crisis came when he met and talked with two hermits from Fonte Avellana. He learned of St Romuald from them . . . he offered them a silver vase To his astonishment, they refused the gift . . . Peter began to perceive that these men were 'truly free and truly happy' (*vere liberi vereque beati*), and the events leading to his entry into Fonte Avellana were thus placed in motion. 36

However, John of Lodi accounts for Damian's conversion quite differently. He writes that after Damian had begun to attract students and wealth by his teaching,

³⁶ Little 72.

. . . he began to reason with himself in this way: 'Why does youth insist upon following the amusements suggested by its flesh? But must I cling to these occupations and not rather, while renouncing them, look ahead toward more important ends (potiora providere)? But what if I promise that I will now begin to do so, while I am still in the vigor of my youth, and while my fortunes prosper? For I do not live in the way that is far more desirable and more pleasing to God.' 37

While in Little's description Damian's crisis focused primarily on an emotional reaction to wealth, John's description focuses on the question of what is truly valuable in life. Damian's decision to renounce wealth followed upon his decision to seek to please God before all else. It is inadequate to present his conversion process without considering this questioning of values, and this aspiration.

It was shortly after the time of Peter Damian and John Gualbert that eremitism spread more widely. Lackner states that it was particularly toward the end of the eleventh century that this movement grew. Though he describes it as spreading "all over western Europe," he emphasizes its particular strength in the western forestal regions of France.³⁸

Among the names we have preserved of individual hermits, Leclercq lists William Firmat (d. 1095), Bernard of Tiron (d. 1117), Gerard of Salles (d. 1120), Vitalis of Mortain (d. 1122), and Stephen of Muret (d. 1124), as well as Geoffrey of Lèves and Rainald the

³⁷ Joannes monachus, Vita B. Petri Damiani, Patrologiae CXLIV, 117: ". . . ita secum agere coepit: Et cur delecter praesentibus, ut caro suggerit aetas exposcit? sed nunquid his perituris debeo inhaerere, et non magis istis renuntians potiora providere? At si forte postmodum hoc me facturum promitto, quia non multo charius multoque Deo acceptius modo agere satago, dum aetas viget, dum prospera mulcent?"

³⁸ Lackner 146-47.

Hermit.³⁹ Gougaud mentions one

. . . Anastase, an old monk of Mont-Saint Michel, who retired first to the islet of Tombeline, and then to the Pyrenees. A man of great austerity of life, and author of a theological treatise, he was in contact with Saint Hugh, Abbot of Cluny, who held him in high esteem, and Saint Anselm expressed the wish to count him among his own correspondents. 40

Leclercq also mentions another hermit named Hugh, who was bishop of Nevers from 1110 to 1120.⁴¹

Lackner believes that these hermits came from a broad spectrum of society, including "clerics and laymen, men and women, rich and poor, soldiers and peasants, lettered and unlettered."⁴² Leclercq states that "these new kinds of 'hermits' were often laymen, living first alone, and then in little groups; sometimes there was a community of women living separated from them as in the double monasteries." They worked to keep themselves, and borrowed a simple scheme of prayer "either from the liturgies of the canons or monks, or from the vocal prayer of some group of lay ascetics and penitents."⁴³

These descriptions present an image similar to that presented by Leclercq in his discussion of canons. It is also reminiscent of Southern's characterization of the canonical lifestyle as displaying "spontaneity, variety, and freedom of movement," and as "adopted by

³⁹ J. Leclercq, "Le poème de Payen Bolotin contre les faux ermites," Revue Bénédictine 73 (1958): 69-70.

⁴⁰ Gougaud 44.

⁴¹ Leclercq, "Le poème," 56.

⁴² Lackner 147.

⁴³ Leclercq et al., Spirituality 129.

many groups of clergy and laity on the fringes of organized religious life."⁴⁴ Together, these may suggest something of a common milieu for hermits and canons, characterized by variety, spontaneity, and mixed social background.

The discussion of Romuald and John Gualbert, as well as the mention of the hermit Anastase, point to ties between the eremitic movement and traditional Benedictine monasticism. This is suggested both in the movement of individuals, and the merging of elements from both traditions. These may be further exemplified from accounts of monastic foundations.

The well-known example of the Cistercians may be proposed as an example of the merging of elements from both traditions. They implemented a variation on traditional Benedictine monasticism that stressed austerity, contemplation, and manual labor. Before setting out to found the community of Cîteaux, Robert of Molesme had in 1074 left his monastery to assume the leadership of a group of hermits living in a nearby forest. In 1075 Robert and his companions moved to Molesme to form a monastery. Though conditions were at first primitive and difficult, within a few years Molesme had come to resemble the average contemporary monastery. At some time between 1090 and 1093, Robert again left his monastery to join a community of hermits. Though he returned to his monastery, he would within a few years set off to found Cîteaux.⁴⁵

Bruno of Cologne visited Molesme before going on to found

⁴⁴ Southern 242-43.

⁴⁵ Lackner 220-22, 233-34.

Chartreuse. While Chartreuse is known for its strictly eremitic life, Lackner comments that Bruno "utilized certain cenobitic features in the make-up of his organization. He brought the cells closer to each other . . . and connected them with a corridor,"⁴⁶ Zarnecki notes that the Carthusians borrowed many Cistercian customs.⁴⁷

Fliche mentions a number of individuals from within the eremitic current of late eleventh-century France who founded monasteries emphasizing ascetical practices and manual labor. Though details of the foundations are not provided, this list may perhaps suggest something of the broader context for such figures as Robert and Bruno. Fliche lists Anthenor of Scher in the Vosges in 1085, Guarin in the Alps in 1090, Peter of the Star at Fontgombault, and Bernard of Tiron, Vitalis of Mortain, and Raul of la Frestage in Normandy, in 1094.⁴⁸ Bernard and Vitalis will be discussed as examples of itinerant preachers.

Though centered on these two movements of canonical and eremitic revival, the expansion of the lifestyle of voluntary poverty fanned out into quite a diverse variety of forms. This provided the context for the development of the itinerant preaching style. The actions of the reform papacy must be considered a factor in this development. However, these sources caution against the over-emphasis of this single factor. They suggest its consideration within an interaction of needs,

⁴⁶ Lackner 205, 208.

⁴⁷ George Zarnecki, The Monastic Achievement, Library of Medieval Civilization (New York: McGraw, 1972) 101.

⁴⁸ Fliche 446.

aspirations, trends within society, and other sources of inspiration.

Evidence examined within this discussion can recommend the role of monastic models.

CHAPTER III

ROBERT OF ARBRISSEL

It was within this restless context that the style of the wandering preacher developed. Aside from crusade preachers, my sources mention by name eight individuals who began their itinerant preaching between 1095 and 1120. These may be suggested as representing the first generation of preachers. They include the saints Robert of Arbrissel, Bernard of Tiron, Vitalis of Mortain, Géraud of Sales, and Norbert of Xanten. They also include the heretics Tanchelm, Henry the Monk, and Peter of Bruys. Of these, Robert was the first to begin his itinerant preaching. He is also mentioned as influencing some of the others. This discussion will thus begin with him, after setting out some background for the notion of wandering.

Cohn mentions two earlier figures who set out to wander and preach. Gregory of Tours recorded the story of a certain man who went out of his mind, became a hermit, and finally set out wandering, healing, and prophesying. St. Boniface recorded the story of a man named Aldebert who practiced apostolic poverty, and wandered through the countryside setting up crosses and preaching beside them. Cohn also mentions that Gregory wrote of having met several such figures.¹

Occurring in the sixth and eighth centuries, these figures were

¹ Norman Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford UP, 1970) 41-44.

quite remote from Robert. They may be taken to suggest that some notion of a wandering apostolate had occurred sporadically before him.

Closer to Robert in time, sources mention a number of heretics sprinkled through the eleventh century for whom mobility is suggested. They are spoken of as having distant origins, and traveling from one diocese to another. Jeffrey Burton Russell tells of a group of heretics who arrived at Liège in 1025. "These heretics dwelt awhile within the borders of the diocese and made a number of converts by preaching among the simple folk." Another group of such heretics arrived at Orléans in about 1015.

Their heresy had been introduced from the south, one source imputing the responsibility to an Italian woman who brought the pestilence into Gaul, another laying the blame at the feet of a certain 'simple' of Périgueux who was supposed to have carried the plague northward to Orléans. 2

This can suggest some background to the notion of a wandering apostolate in the eleventh century.

However, heretics would not likely have represented a positive image to Robert. Also, as Edward Peters points out, evidence for such popular heretics appears in "a few sources between 1000 and 1050," and in "virtually none between 1050 and 1100."³

J. Musy hints at a possible connection between wandering students and wandering preachers. He notes William of Malmesbury's statement that Berengar's teachings were disseminated through France by

² Jeffrey Burton Russell, Dissent and Reform in the Early Middle Ages (Berkeley: U of California P, 1965) 21, 27-28.

³ Edward Peters, ed., Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe: Documents in Translation, The Middle Ages (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1980) 58.

poor students.⁴ Robert himself is described as wandering in search of an education in his youth. However, there do not seem to have been many wandering students yet at this time. Also, the style, outlook, and impetus of the students would have been quite distinct from those of Robert's wandering apostolate.

The pilgrimage would present a less precisely similar precursor, but a more likely one. Jonathan Sumption states that "after the end of the tenth century growing numbers of the humble as well as the mighty performed distant pilgrimages to expiate crimes that weighed on their consciences." One such pilgrimage was made by Robert, Duke of Normandy. Under suspicion of having murdered his brother, he "travelled barefoot to Jerusalem in 1035 'driven by the fear of God.'" Sumption also notes that the Normans "were notoriously the most energetic pilgrims of the eleventh century and became the leaders of the early crusades." Many of them visited Santiago de Compostella, and hostels in Rome specialized in accommodating them.⁵ This information about northwest France would be relevant to Robert's own experience.

Sumption also connects interest in distant pilgrimages with the monastic revivals in Normandy, Aquitaine, and Burgundy:

The enthusiasm which the fate of the Holy Places aroused in these three provinces of France had much to do with the monastic revival. The interest of the monks in the Holy Land was reflected in their libraries. The library of St Martial of Limoges was a mine of topographical information on the Holy Land.

⁴ J. Musy, "Mouvements populaires et hérésies au XI^e siècle en France," Revue Historique Janv.-Mars 1975: 57.

⁵ Jonathan Sumption, Pilgrimage: An Image of Medieval Religion (Totowa: Rowman, 1975) 100-01, 117-18.

Odo of Cluny's Life of Gerald, count of Aurillac presented an idealized portrait of a knight who lived a semi-monastic life, and made annual pilgrimages to Rome. Sumption states that ". . . Odo's description did much to mould contemporary notions of lay piety."⁶

As pilgrimages were supposed to be penitential, an emphasis on mortification was taken more seriously by some pilgrims. A model was the eleventh-century St Aibert.

Walking completely barefoot, clothed in a simple tunic, and with scarcely a penny on them, he and his companions set out for Rome rich in the abundance of their poverty. They rode on horseback rarely or never, and used their mule only to help weak and infirm pilgrims whom they met on the road. ⁷

The character of pilgrimage was quite distinct from that of the wandering apostolate. Nevertheless, it certainly injected the element of movement into possible images of the religious life. Both its popularity and its aspect of mortification recommend it as a precursor to Robert's wandering.

For Robert of Arbrissel (c. 1055-1117) we have two major sources. They are lives written shortly after his death. One is by Baldric, Bishop of Dol. The other is believed to have been written by the monk Andrew, Robert's disciple and confessor.⁸

Baldric describes how, from his native village of Arbrissel in Brittany, Robert set out wandering.

⁶ Sumption 119, 121-22.

⁷ Sumption 127.

⁸ Baldricus Episcopus Dolens, Vita B. Roberti de Arbrissello, Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris: Garnier, 1844-64) CLXII, 1043-58; Andrea monachus Fontis Ebraldi, ut creditur, Vita altera B. Roberti de Arbrissello, Patrologiae CLXII, 1057-78.

He seemed to be driven through the world by a hot pursuit of erudition. From childhood, he had been devoted to the acquisition of learning -- which, however, he was somehow not able quite to catch hold of. So he roamed about restlessly through regions and provinces, eagerly seeking out this evasive prize. And since Francia, at that time, bloomed forth more abundantly in scholarly achievements, he left his homeland, like an exile and a fugitive, and went there. He came into the city called Paris 9

Baldric seems to be implying for him something of a native penchant for wandering, while also characterizing his journey as a form of mortification.

While pursuing his education, Robert came to the attention of the bishop, who took Robert into his household. Baldric notes this as being during the papacy of Gregory VII. After becoming a priest, Robert became involved in the issues of church reform. He fought lay control of churches, clerical marriage, simony, and "all vices." After four years the bishop died. At this point Robert left Paris.¹⁰

Concerning the next part of his life sources differ. Baldric states that after fleeing from city to city, he came to Angers and taught philosophy. However, his religious fervor did not cool, as he gave himself now to prayer, and now to reading. After two years he "advanced to the state of hermit, and dedicated himself totally to contemplation." Little basically agrees with this version, but adds

⁹ Baldricus 1047: "Eugientes litteras per orbem persequi videbatur, quoniam ab annis infantilibus, litterarum studiis, quas assequi non poterat, fuerat deputatus. Perambulabat regiones et provincias irrequietus, et in litterarum studiis non poterat esse sollicitus. Et quoniam Francia tum florebat in scholaribus emolumentis copiosior, fines paternos, tamquam exsul et fugitivus, exivit, Franciam adiit, et urbem, quae Parisius dicitur, intravit . . ."

¹⁰ Baldricus 1049.

that Robert acted as priest at Rennes before going on to Angers. Manteuffel, however, states that he was also a priest at Angers, where he "acquired a reputation for rousing crowds with his preaching." Andrew does not cover this portion of Robert's life.¹¹

Robert thus presents another example of a reformer and hermit. According to Baldric's information, Robert was a reformer before becoming a hermit. However, his account also supports the contention that his eremitism had little to do with reformist ideas. It was a decision based in the development of his own spirituality. Yet in light of the information suggested by both Baldric and Manteuffel, a connection between his earlier reforming zeal and his later particular style of poverty cannot be dismissed as a possibility.

Upon Robert's conversion to eremitism, he left Angers for the forest of Craon. Manteuffel describes Craon as on the borders of Normandy and Brittany. Little states that this move occurred in 1092. Manteuffel states that Robert came to Craon in 1095, accompanied by faithful followers.¹² Baldric tells of Robert coming to the forest to be "a companion of the beasts," but then beginning to attract a following. People came to him to ask advice. Soon he found himself

¹¹ Baldricus 1049; Lester K. Little, Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978) 78; Tadeusz Manteuffel, Naissance d'une hérésie: Les adeptes de la pauvreté volontaire au Moyen Âge, trad. Anna Posner, Civilisations et Sociétés 6 (Paris: Mouton, 1970) 32. Manteuffel does not cite a source for this point though he relies for this period of Robert's life primarily upon: J. de Pétigny, "Robert d'Arbrissel et Geoffroi de Vendôme," Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Charles, 3e série, V (Paris, 1854) and Johannes von Walter, Die ersten Wanderprediger Frankreichs, I: Robert von Arbrissel (Leipzig, 1903).

¹² Manteuffel 27, 32; Little 78.

preaching to gatherings of them. A community began settling around him, and he formed them into a community of canons. Undoubtedly reacting to criticism, Baldric stresses how orderly their life was. He calls them "regulars, who took pains to live regularly, according to the customs of the primitive church" (more primitivae Ecclesiae). He compares Robert's guidance to that of a wise bee.¹³

Then, according to both Baldric and Andrew, Pope Urban II heard of Robert while visiting Angers. He came to see Robert, and was so impressed that he commanded Robert to go about preaching among the people. Baldric also notes that the pope warned Robert not to preach anything unusual (non insolitis . . . sermonibus uti). Manteuffel mentions that this visit would have occurred in February of 1096, at which time Urban passed through Angers. He records in a footnote that E. Werner questions the truth of Robert's commission from the pope. Little and Fliche both present this event without questioning it, though Little characterizes it as "extraordinary."¹⁴

Ullmann characterizes Urban in a way that would be consistent with his commissioning of Robert. "He had the gift of appealing to, and influencing, the French masses and had also the skill to select the right preachers to propagate the idea of a crusade."¹⁵ Further credibility is added by Baldric's mention of Urban's warning to Robert,

¹³ Baldricus 1049-50.

¹⁴ Baldricus 1049-51; Andrea 1060; Manteuffel 32; Little 78; Augustin Fliche, La réforme grégorienne et la reconquête chrétienne (1057-1123), vol. 8 of Histoire de l'église depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours, ed. Augustin Fliche et Victor Martin, 21 vols. (N.p.: Bloud & Gay, 1950) 448.

¹⁵ Walter Ullmann, A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle

as well as by the mention that Urban encouraged the movement of canons and viewed them as doing the "work of Martha."

Robert clearly took to his task. Baldric reports that having made the circuit of his own diocese, Robert asked permission of the bishop and clergy of Angers to preach more widely.¹⁶

The crusade preachers are clearly important as his immediate precursors. Cohn describes the mission of Peter the Hermit, following the Council of Clermont in 1095, Peter is described as born near Amiens, and as having passed a sternly ascetic life first as a monk, then as a hermit. He exhibited the eremitic attributes of a long beard and bare feet, as well as abstention from meat and wine. Cohn also describes him as possessing a commanding presence and great eloquence. After the Council of Clermont he passed through northern France into Germany, gathering an army. His followers were mostly poor. They included men, women, and children, as well as "all kinds of nondescript adventurers." "And meanwhile other hordes were forming around other leaders in northern France, in Flanders and along the Rhine."¹⁷

This element suggests itself as very close to Robert, both in style and in social milieu. However, he presents a marked contrast to it in the breadth of his message, in the character of his apostolate as a permanent way of life, and in his role as peacemaker. Baldric describes him as "making peace out of discord," and characterizes his

Agas (London: Methuen, 1972) 166.

¹⁶ Baldricus 1051.

¹⁷ Cohn 61-65.

community by its harmony. Andrew mentions his being asked in to help settle a disputed episcopal election at Chartres.¹⁸ While perhaps idealized, this certainly suggests a marked difference in emphasis from the crusade preachers.

Neither Baldric nor Andrew specify that Robert was commissioned to preach a particular sort of message. Fliche indicates his message as "penitence and poverty."¹⁹ Manteuffel says,

. . . Anjou, Touraine, and Poitou became the field of his activities. Clothed in rags, he walked barefoot from one village to another, fighting the demoralisation of the clergy and calling all Christians to make an act of penitence, seen as giving oneself up to asceticism, the preliminary stage of amelioration of relations between people. 20

In 1100 or 1101, Robert established Fontevrault, his major monastic foundation. Andrew records a later conversation which provides a notion of the combination of penitence and love Robert called people to. It is Robert's explanation of why he wants to be buried at Fontevrault.

. . .but I will be buried only at Fontevrault among my brothers. For there are my priests and other clergy, there the holy virgins, the widows and the continent, persevering night and day in the praise of God, there my beloved sick ones, and there my dear lepers and leprosses. There indeed are the steadfast companions of my wanderings. There are those who have long sustained poverty and labor with me for Christ's sake. There are the ones who have patiently sustained heat and cold, miseries and trials for the salvation of their souls. 21

¹⁸ Baldricus 1048, 1052; Andrea 1064-65, 1068.

¹⁹ Fliche 448.

²⁰ Manteuffel 33.

²¹ Andrea 1073-74: ". . . sed tantum inter fraterculos meos in Fontis Evraldi luto. Ibi etiam sunt presbyteri mei, atque clerici: ibi etiam sunt sanctae virgines, viduae et continentes, die ac nocte

This can also suggest the penitential nature of his wanderings and poverty, akin to the spirit of the penitential pilgrimage.

Robert established Fontevrault as a double monastery of four houses, presided over by an abbess. It housed separately lepers, former prostitutes, contemplative nuns, and men. Zarnecki reports that it had a "prodigious success," and that in less than twenty years Fontevrault and its dependencies housed three thousand nuns. The order was confirmed by Pope Paschal II in 1106.²²

Zarnecki writes that double monasteries

. . . originated in Egypt, and were introduced to western Europe in the sixth century. There were a number of such monasteries in Gaul, for instance Jouarre. In Spain there existed in the early Middle Ages two hundred double monasteries. St Columbanus was a great supporter of this institution, though there was only one such monastery in Ireland, at Kildare. Introduced into England either from Ireland or Gaul, double monasteries became extremely popular, but they vanished after the Viking invasions. ²³

Little comments that the double monastery was "very unusual at that time," though Leclercq mentions it as occurring in some communities of canons during this general period of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.²⁴

Robert's clear perception that he was doing something unusual

in Dei laudibus perseverantes : ibi sunt mei dilectissimi infirmi atque infirmæ : ibi sunt charissimi mei leprosi atque leprosæ meæ : ibi sunt boni socii peregrinationis meæ : ibi sunt illi, qui paupertates et labores pro Christo mecum diu sustinere : ibi sunt qui frigora et calores, miseriae et tribulationes pro animarum suarum salute patienter sustinuerunt"

²² George Zarnecki, *The Monastic Achievement*, Library of Medieval Civilization (New York: McGraw, 1972) 91-92; Little 79.

²³ Zarnecki 91.

in establishing an abbess over a double monastery, is demonstrated by his exertions to establish it. Andrew records that Robert called all the brothers of Fontevrault to assemble, and:

When all had quickly come together, he said: 'My beloved brethren, whom I have begotten in the Gospel . . . ponder together. while I am still alive, whether or not you wish to persist in your resolution — namely, that for the salvation of your souls, you would obey the instructions of Christ's handmaidens. For you know that every community I have built, with God's help, I have subjected to their power and their dominion (earum potentatui atque dominatui). If you do not really want to stay with them, according to the beginning you have made, I give you permission, having consulted me, to choose another form of religious life.' When they heard this nearly everyone, with one voice, cried out: 'Far be it from us, beloved father, that we should ever leave them Yes, all of us under your jurisdiction promise, freely and unanimously, in the presence of God and his saints, stability and perseverance at the Church of Fontevrault.'

Andrew records Robert's later statement,

'Wherefore I have arranged, with your advice, to establish an abbess over this community. I have arranged this while I remained with you as witness, against the chance that, God forbid! after my death someone should presume to deny this ruling of mine.' 25

Andrew adds that this arrangement was acceded to by the archpriest of

24 Little 79.

25 Andrea 1058-62: "Omnibus celeriter congregatis, ait: «Ecce, filii mei charissimi, quos in Evangelio genui . . . deliberate vobiscum, dum adhuc vivo, utrum permanere velitis in vestro proposito; ut scilicet, pro animarum vestrarum salute, obediatis ancillarum Christi praecepto. Scitis enim quia quaecunque, Deo cooperante, alicubi aedificavi, earum potentatui atque dominatui subdidi. Si vero cum illis remanere, sicut coepistis, non vultis; do vobis licentiam, cum meo tamen consilio, alterius religionis.» Quo audito, pene omnes unanimi voce dixerunt: «Absit hoc, charissime pater, a nobis, ut unquam eas relinquamus . . . ! Imo stabilitatem atque perseverantiam Fontebraldensi Ecclesiae, coram Deo et sanctis ejus, in manu tua omnes unanimiter, atque spontanee promittimus.» " "Quamobrem disposui, cum vestro consilio, huic congregationi, donec sum superstes, abbatis-sam ordinare, ne forte, quod absit! post obitum meum aliquis praesumat huic meae definitioni contradicere."

Angers, who

affirms that, one time when he was in Rome, he heard Lord Pope Urban . . . grant that, according to the condition and needs of a particular church, a certain mature lady, whose choice had been supported by four men, might be made abbess.

Finally, Andrew mentions the privilege sent by Pope Paschal II through his envoys.²⁶

Robert, and Andrew, were clearly going to great lengths to establish this custom. Unfortunately, neither of Robert's biographers gives any hint as to why he chose to structure his monasteries in this way. This may nevertheless serve to underline a striking quality of social innovation in his work. It is akin to a quality of renewal by which Baldric characterizes Fontevrault. He sees in it the achieved ideal, in microcosm, of one great, new, loving family of all God's people.

Baldric describes men and women, laymen and clerics, all flowing in to form this community,

. . . all bound by fraternal love. There was no bitterness among them, no jealousy, no discord Many people of every condition flowed in together. Here were gathered women, poor and nobles, widows and maidens, old men and youths, prostitutes and those who spurn the advances of men. . . . this little family of his, needy and beggarly Both princes and people came to join into this new family of God. . . . they received the poor, and they did not turn away the crippled; nor did they refuse the incestuous, nor seductresses; lepers, nor the deranged. 27

²⁶ Andrea 1059-62.: ". . . affirmans quod, dum quondam Romae esset, audivit dominum Urbanum papam . . . concedentem, ut quaedam matrona, quae quatuor viros habuerat, pro tempore et necessitate cujusdam ecclesiae, abbatissa fieret."

²⁷ Baldricus 1052-55: ". . . omnes amore fraterno conglutinabantur. Nulla inter eos amaritudo, nulla invidentia, discordia nulla Multi confluebant homines cujuslibet conditionis; conveniebant mulieres, pauperes et nobiles, viduae et virgines, senes et

To represent the identity of this "new family of God" as a whole, "the poor" are chosen: "this little family of his, needy and beggarly."

These members of his family are also those whom Robert "was unwilling to have called by any other name than Christ's poor (pauperes Christi).²⁸ A few other examples of this expression's usage may suggest for it some tendency toward a blending of the images of monk and pauper. Pierre-André Sigal lists several saints' lives of the eleventh century which develop the theme of identification of the poor with Christ — that in ministering to the poor, one ministers to Christ. He comments that these lives frequently use the term pauperes Christi to designate paupers, though in other contexts it is used to designate monks.²⁹ Manteuffel states that it is particularly beginning in about 1000 that monks chose to be designated in this way.³⁰ Martine Peaudecerf mentions one of these cases. Monks of Cluny are designated in a 1027 charter of donation as pauperes Christi "who serve God in this place."³¹

adolescentes, meretrices et masculorum aspernatrices. . . . suam familiolam inopem et mendicam Adventabant principes et populi, novam Dei familiam . . . suscipiebant pauperes, ac debiles non repellebant; nec incestas, nec pellices refutabant; leprosos, nec impotentes."

²⁸ Baldricus 1053.

²⁹ Pierre-André Sigal, "Pauvreté et charité aux XI^e et XII^e siècles d'après quelques textes hagiographiques," Etudes sur l'histoire de la pauvreté, ed. Michel Mollat (Paris: Sorbonne, 1974) 151.

³⁰ Manteuffel 27.

³¹ Martine Peaudecerf, "La pauvreté à l'abbaye de Cluny d'après son cartulaire," Etudes 226.

In an open letter of 1081 to all the faithful, Gregory VII asked, "But is it any wonder if the princes of the earth, and the powerful of this world, hate us pauperes Christi who resist their crookedness . . . ?"³² This usage may be suggested as implying both Gregory's spiritual position, and overtones of identification with the socio-economically poor. Lackner reports that at the turn of the century, the papal legate Hugh of Lyons used this expression for the early Cistercian pioneers. He saw in them authentic pauperes Christi, "having no wealth or power to defend themselves against their adversaries."³³ Little describes Robert's contemporary, Stephen of Muret, as also seeing the members of his community as pauperes Christi. This was an informal, semi-monastic community which after Stephen's death became the formally structured monastery of Grandmont. He put the question to prospective members, "Will you be able, brother, to be a farmer, to carry wood and manure, and to serve all of your brothers?"³⁴

These examples may be taken to suggest that within Robert's context, his use of this expression is likely to have represented some blending along these lines. This trend would be consistent with its setting of a search for truer poverty.

A related theme is Robert's calling of the poor as an imitatio Christi. Baldric sets this out:

Did not Robert clearly show himself to be imitating the one

³² S. Gregorius VII Papa, Ep. ix.21, Patrologiae CXLVIII, 622: "Quid autem mirum si principes mundi et potentes saeculi nos pauperes Christi, pravitatibus illorum obviantes, odiunt . . . ?"

³³ Lackner 271.

³⁴ Little 79-81.

who said: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, he has sent me to bring the good news to the poor'? This man did in fact bring the good news to the poor, call the poor, and gather the poor. 35

This falls within an awakening interest in the imitatio Christi. Jaroslav Pelikan points out that "in the tenth and eleventh centuries there was being developed and articulated the characteristically Western understanding of Christ" This occurred primarily within Benedictine piety centering on "the love of Christ." One aspect of this focused on the redemptive function of Christ's incarnation, and culminated in St Anselm's Why God Became Man. Another aspect focused on Christ's role in teaching mankind how to live. This emphasized not only his words, but also his deeds as a pattern for imitation.³⁶

Pelikan mentions St Odo of Cluny, in the tenth century, teaching that Christ had become a man so that human beings could not dismiss his virtues as impossible. "'That was why he did not give them an archangel, but himself as a model.'" It was particularly his humility that was to be imitated.³⁷

As a major eleventh-century spokesman for the imitatio Christi, Damian wrote,

Consider this humility of our Redeemer, dearest brothers, with the entire attention of your soul. Attend resourcefully to acquiring it. Cast away the glory of this world, and,

³⁵ Baldricus 1055: "Nonne Robertus evidenter illius imitator claruit, qui dixit: Spiritus Domini super me, evangelizare pauperibus misit me? (Luc. IV, 18.) Iste revera pauperibus evangelizavit, pauperes vocavit, pauperes collegit."

³⁶ Jaroslav Pelikan, The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300), The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine 3 (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978) 106-129.

³⁷ Pelikan 125.

being paupers with Christ, choose out for yourself genuine wealth. Turn your efforts toward offering God the sacrifice of a pure will, if you wish to show yourselves genuinely wealthy in his sight. 38

Another emphasis discussed by Pelikan is the summons to "take up the cross of the Redeemer" and "follow in the footsteps of his passion." These symbolized the Christian life of self-mortification. On this Damian wrote,

. . . let us, for the sake of his love, also mortify in ourselves every desire for earthly pleasure. By his willingness to undergo the suffering of the cross, he has shown us the road by which we can return to our fatherland. 39

The imitatio Christi also served as a source of inspiration to Stephen of Muret. Little reports that for his community, Stephen chose to have no other rule than the Gospel. "For there is just one first rule of rules, from which all the others flow like streams from a spring, I mean of course the holy Gospel" Stephen also said, "Look, you can go into any monastery whatever, where you'll find huge buildings and first-rate cuisine . . . but here you will find only the cross and poverty."⁴⁰

Jean Musy, Lackner, and Vauchez suggest that the itinerant preachers held Christ as a model. Musy states that they imitated his poverty. Lackner proposes that they held Christ, the apostles and the

³⁸ Petrus Damianus, Serm. 61, Patrologiae CXLIV, 847: "Hanc Redemptoris nostri humilitatem, fratres charissimi, tota animi consideratione perpendite; hanc solerter habere curate, mundi gloriam spernite, pauperes esse cum Christo veras divitias deputate. Sacrificium Deo bonae voluntatis offerre satagite, si in conspectu ejus vultis veri divites apparere."

³⁹ Pelikan 126-27.

⁴⁰ Little 80-82.

Fathers as models for their poverty and preaching. Vauchez also attributes their poverty to a desire to follow Christ.⁴¹

The accounts of Robert's life presented by Baldric and Andrew suggest that the imitatio Christi was a source of inspiration for him. Andrew quotes Robert as declaring, "The entire life of a Christian man is a cross and a martyrdom," There are also three mentions of sustaining poverty "for Christ's sake" (pro Christo). One of these is attributed to Robert, and is the description of his companions as having "sustained poverty and labor with me for Christ's sake."⁴²

Baldric's words suggest that Robert may also have seen his call to the poor as an imitatio Christi. This source of inspiration may be proposed as blending with the image of the penitential pilgrimage, the example of the crusade preachers, and the emphasis among the canons on doing "the work of Martha," as the background for Robert's style.

⁴¹ Musy 73-74; A. Vauchez, "La pauvreté volontaire au Moyen Age," Annales 25 (1970): 1571; Lackner 150.

⁴² Andrea 1076: "Omnia vita Christiani hominis crux est et martyrium."; Andrea 1073-74: (Robert): ". . . paupertates et labores pro Christo mecum diu sustinere."; Andrea 1070: ", . . et pro Christo paupertatem delegerat."; Baldricus 1056: ". . . Robertus omnimodo pro Christo pauperatus"

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST GENERATION OF WANDERING PREACHERS

Following Robert of Arbrissel's beginning in 1096, at least three other figures are mentioned as joining with him in his itinerant preaching. Bernard of Tiron (c. 1047-1117) was born and raised in Abbéville in north-eastern France. His life was written by Geoffrey the Fat, Bernard's "disciple" and director of the school in the monastery founded by Bernard.¹ Geoffrey states that in his youth, Bernard eagerly studied "grammar, dialectic, and other literary arts."² Little notes that Bernard entered the monastery of Saint-Cyprian, near Poitiers, at about the age of twenty. He was subsequently transferred to the nearby monastery of Saint-Savin. A brother who had been elected abbot of Saint-Savin brought Bernard along as prior. Together, they directed Saint-Savin's affairs for twenty years. However, at this point the abbot died. To avoid being elected as his friend's successor, Bernard fled. He became a hermit in the forests of Maine and Brittany.³

¹ Gaufridus Grossus, *Vita B. Bernardi Tironensis*, *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1844-64) CLXXII, 1367-446. Mention of Geoffrey's direction of the monastery school in Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978) 77.

² Gaufridus 1373; Little 76.

³ Little 76-77.

Geoffrey relates that when confronted with the impending election to the abbacy, Bernard sought out the advice of a nearby hermit named Peter. Bernard confided to Peter his eagerness for "poverty and solitude," and his fear that if he didn't leave quickly he would be compelled to assume the cares of the abbacy. Peter obligingly agreed to conduct Bernard to a remote region. They traveled together

. . . to the vast solitudes bordering the regions of Maine and Brittany, which at that time flourished with a multitude of hermits as if it were another Egypt . . . among whom the leaders and instructors were Robert of Arbrissel, Vitalis of Mortain, and Raoul of Frestage. 4

After living among the hermits for some time, Bernard was called back to his original monastery of Saint-Cyprian to serve as abbot. He agreed, but soon found himself involved in a struggle to maintain Saint-Cyprian's independence against Cluniac claims to jurisdiction. In the final settlement Saint-Cyprian remained independent, but Bernard was deposed. At this point he returned to the hermitage. Meeting again with Robert and Vitalis, he set out with them to preach through the countryside.⁵

Of Vitalis, my sources mention little beyond his joining Robert and Bernard in their preaching. J. Musy states that Vitalis had been a canon of Saint-Evrault, and chaplain to Robert of Mortain, a brother of William the Conqueror. Vitalis left to seek the solitude of a hermitage. Leclercq adds that he later founded the monastery of Savigny, and

⁴ Gaufridus 1380-81: ". . . in confinio Cenomanicae Britanniaeque regionis vastae solitudines quae tunc temporis quasi altera Aegyptus florebat multitudine eremitarum . . . inter quos erant principes et magistri, Robertus de Arbrissello, atque Vitalis de Mauritania, Radulphus quoque de Fusteja"

⁵ Little 77.

died in 1122.⁶

Geoffrey describes their preaching:

They wandered about barefoot through these regions of France. They preached the word of God in villages, at castles, and in the cities. Uprooting men from the errors of their lives, like solid and powerful battering-rams . . . they revived souls that in their sins had died, and having revived them, they united these souls to the God of true life. Working such wonders, they circled through various provinces, sometimes together, and at other times separately. 7

Little relates that Bernard then attempted to settle once more and establish a monastic community. His first attempt failed, but then with the help of Ivo of Chartres he was able to found his Abbey of the Holy Trinity on the Tiron River. His influence spread, and "eventually Tiron was an order of ten abbeys and over forty priories."⁸

According to Geoffrey, many monks left other monasteries to seek Bernard and the poverty of Tiron.

Many monks, holy and pious men, drawn by his reputation for sanctity, hurried out of various monasteries to join him, so that they might see the new Anthony living in his hermitage, and follow in the footsteps of his poverty. 9

⁶ J. Musy, "Mouvements populaires et hérésies au XI^e siècle en France," Revue Historique Janv.-Mars 1975: 75; J. Leclercq, "Le poème de Payen Bolotin contre les faux ermites," Revue Bénédictine 73 (1958): 70.

⁷ Gaufridus 1397: "Gallicanas hi regiones nudis peragrabant; in villis, castellis, atque urbibus verbum Dei praedicabant; homines ab erroribus vitae suae eruentes, quasi validi ac robustissimi arietes . . . animas in peccatis mortuas vivificabant et vivificatas Deo verae vitae conjungebant. Talia igitur signa facientes, quandoque simul, aliquando vero singulatim diversas provincias circuibant"; Little 77.

⁸ Little 77.

⁹ Gaufridus 1411: "Multi etiam monachi, viri sancti ac religiosi, ex diversis monasteriis, fama sanctitatis illius permoti, ad eum concurrere festinabant, ut novum Antonium in eremo residentem viderent, atque paupertatis illius vestigiis inhaererent."; Little 77-78.

With Bernard and Vitalis, my sources mention one other individual who was drawn to join Robert in his itinerant preaching. Little reports a contemplative regular canon named Géraud of Sales (d. 1120) who quit his community for this purpose. Little quotes Géraud's biographer. "He was glowing in the cloister but not beaming forth his light to a world in peril because he was not properly situated for that. He could see the abundant harvest but also the scarcity of workers and the richness of the reward."¹⁰

Several points may be suggested by this discussion. The most striking common factor among these figures is their emergence from positions within the church. Bernard's life, in particular, exemplifies a striking restlessness and movement between different forms of religious life. This is consistent with the occurrence of other examples of this quality within the more general expansion of the lifestyle of voluntary poverty. It would also be a compatible milieu for the development of such a style as itinerant preaching.

Bernard is also another example of a monk who left his monastery to become a hermit. Geoffrey describes both Bernard's flight, and the subsequent flight of "many monks" to join the "new Anthony." Géraud was also a regular religious, and Vitalis may have been. It is not mentioned whether he was a regular or a secular canon. In examining the general expansion of voluntary poverty, monasticism was stressed specifically as a central model. For the purposes of discussing the backgrounds of itinerant preachers, formal communities of regular religious may be proposed as together constituting the more significant

¹⁰ Little 107.

category.

One of these figures left his position specifically to join Robert in preaching. The other two left, like Robert, to seek the poverty and solitude of the hermitage. They were then drawn from this element into preaching.

Both Lackner and Leclercq emphasize the growth of the eremitic movement in this particular area. They also note the tendency for wandering preachers to come from the ranks of these hermits. Lackner states that the eremitic movement ". . . also reached France and grew especially strong in its western forestal regions during the last decade of the eleventh century." He also states that

Closely connected with the rebirth of eremitism, the will to return to the sources and to be a witness of authentic Christianity, was the emergence during the second half of the eleventh century of itinerant preachers, mostly from the ranks of the hermits.

The examples he mentions are Robert, Vitalis, and Bernard.¹¹

Leclercq similarly notes the growth of an eremitic movement between 1095 and 1145, particularly in Maine, Normandy, and Brittany. He also states that they were inclined toward preaching.¹² Cohn comments, "When a man decided to become a wandering preacher, whether orthodox or dissenting, he often started by going into a forest and living for some time as a hermit."¹³

¹¹ Bede K. Lackner, The Eleventh-Century Background of Cîteaux, Cistercian Studies Series 8 (Washington, D.C.: Consortium, 1972) 147, 150-51.

¹² Leclercq, "Le poème," 65.

¹³ Norman Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford UP, 1970) 45.

Contemporaries marked this pattern, and its seeming incongruity, by calling the wandering preachers "false hermits." The chronicler of the Council of Pisa, writing in about 1135, used this term for Henry the Monk.¹⁴ Approximately five years earlier, a canon of Chartres named Pagan Bolotin had written a poem "On the False Hermits, Who Scamper Around as Vagabonds,"¹⁵

Bolotin's poem may provide the perceptions of a contemporary critic of the wandering preachers. His criticism is aimed particularly at their hypocrisy in failing to live according to the definition of religious life they have set for themselves. He begins,

Order impious, devoid of all order, since with the skins of
sheep

It clothes itself, and seeks to be considered holy,

Yet it does not evidence this holiness in its deeds. 16

He presents the development of this lifestyle as a perversion of the monastic life, portending the end of the world. This perception of the new style's origin is consistent with the proposal that the adoption and extension of monastic models, and reaction against

¹⁴ "Henry Before the Council of Pisa," trans. from "Actus pontificum Cenomannis in urbe degentium," ed. G. Busson and A. Ledru (Archives historiques du Maine, II Le Mans, 1901), in Heresies of the High Middle Ages: Selected Sources Translated and Annotated, ed. Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans (New York: Columbia UP, 1969) 114.

¹⁵ Paganus Bolotinus, "De falsis heremitis qui vagando discurrent," entire text presented in Leclercq, "Le poème," 77-84.

¹⁶ Bolotinus 77:
Ordinis expers, ordo nefandus, pelliibus agni
Cum sit amictus, uult reputari religiosus,
Nec tamen actis religionem testificatur.

aspects of these models, was a central characteristic of voluntary poverty's spread. Bolotin writes,

But let us not doubt the end of the world is at hand,
 Since we witness the ominous appearance of such monstrous
 styles of 'holiness.'
 The white habit copies the black one, and the black one the
 white,
 Then a third cloth appears promiscuously, even more 'saint-
 ly' than these others;
 And as if rags were able to confer any sort of holiness,
 While the one habit has taken flight, the other has been
 fecund, yielding a new cowl. 17

The last line is an attempt to translate "Sic fugit unus, quam tulit alter, ferre cucullam" in a way that fits with the previous lines.

The "false hermit" in Bolotin's descriptions wears sometimes rags, sometimes a white habit, and sometimes a black one. At one point he is specifically described as a fugitive from a Benedictine cloister:

So this imitator of religion, while he wears a monk's habit,
 Counterfeits, by his ink-black robes, the true religious.
 Though he seems to us to be a witness to the sacred writings,
 What makes a pious life, is not a black garment.

17

Bolotinus 78:

Iam quia finis temporis instet, ne dubitemus,
 Cum tot oriri religionum monstra uidemus.
 Candida nigris, nigra fit albis emula uestis,
 Tercia mixtim texta uidetur, sanctior istis;
 Et quasi pannus religionem cenferat ullam,
 Sic fugit unus, quam tulit alter, ferre cucullam.

But now, unrestrained, and dashing his mind into foolishness,
 Forsaking the cloister, to wander often about the city;
 Who, by reading or teaching the words of salvation,
 Would have been of great benefit to his brothers within,
 But in this way he squanders it outside, on making speeches
 in the market place. 18

At another point his self-definition as anchorite is contrasted
 with his life in a city:

That pseudoprophet disgraces us by his teaching,
 Who by his white habit is esteemed an anchorite.
 But let him tell us why he so loves the smoke of the city,
 And why he delights in meddling between the mighty and their
 subjects. 19

He is also particularly criticized for his vagrancy and disorderliness, violations of monastic stability and life under a rule:

Even the beasts are believed to live their lives within certain bounds,

18 Bolotinus 77-78:
 Sic simulator religionis, dum tunicatur.
 Religioso uestibus atris assimilatur.
 Sed sacra nobis esse uidetur pagina testis
 Quod pia reddit uita beatum, non nigra uestis.
 Iamque, solutus menteque preceps ad leuitatem,
 Claustra relinquens, sepe uagando circuit urbem;
 Quique legendo siue docendo uerba salutis,
 Fratribus intus commodus esset religiosus,
 Hunc modo frustra detinet extra causa forensis.

19 Bolotinus 79:
 Ista docendo nos inhonorat pseudopropheta,
 Qui reputatur uestibus albis anachoreta.
 Sed fateatur cur ita fumum diligit urbis,
 Sed que potentum gaudeat interponere turbis,

But his deeds show that this man is a parasite, not a hermit.
 For as a vagrant he circles through all cities and regions,
 Delivering novel traditions of religion. 20

He is further specifically faulted with a lifestyle too closely
 resembling that of laymen:

'Our order,' they say, 'is not a reckless one,
 But only appears to more closely fit the condition of laymen,
 Though, of course, were it not supported by a certain epis-
 copal faction,
 This peasant order of ours would certainly never work such
 wonders.' 21

These descriptions may also serve to further characterize the
 preachers' activities. Particularly striking is the suggestion in the
 final set of lines that the preachers' sustained success relies on
 episcopal support. "Episcopal faction" is a translation of "pontifi-
 calis turba." I have translated "pontificalis" as "episcopal" based
 on Bolotin's use of this term elsewhere in the poem for Hugh, Bishop
 of Nevers. 22

Bolotin makes some rather striking statements concerning the

20 Bolotinus 78:
 Bestia talis creditur artam ducere uitam,
 Sed parasitum res probat istum non heremitam.
 Nam uagus omnes circuit urbes et regiones,
 Dando nouarum reli<gi>onum traditiones.

21 Bolotinus 82:
 «Noster, ut aiunt, nullius ordo perdicionis,
 «Sed laicalis forma uidetur condicionis,
 «Quos nisi quedam pontificalis turba foueret,
 «Rusticus ordo talia nunquam bella moueret.» 21

number and popularity of these "false hermits." He claims that

This evil plague now infests nearly the whole world,
But oppresses our own city with a particularly heavy burden.

23

Also,

The whole earth dashes off to follow these hermits,
Princes and burgesses venerate them,
While the rabble worships them, as if it were gathering to
honor saints. 24

Both Bolotin and Geoffrey wrote of monks leaving their monasteries to become hermits or wandering preachers. Further evidence may be proposed to support the occurrence of this pattern in northwest France. While clearly not all hermits or itinerant preachers were former monks, those who were would have provided a major source of monastic ideals and customs among these elements. Bolotin's description of the wandering Benedictine monk can suggest this.

Lackner discusses eleventh-century legislation which implies that vagrant monks were perceived as a problem. He states that within numerous decisions dealing with monastic discipline, the abuses most frequently mentioned by church councils between 1000 and 1150 were apostasy, simony, and "disregard for the ideals of St Benedict." In

²² Bolotinus 82-83.

²³ Bolotinus 78:
Haec mala pestis iam prope totum polluit orbem,
Sed graviore pondere nostram deprimit urbem.

²⁴ Bolotinus 84:
Totus et orbis post heremitas esse cucurrit,
Municipales atque potentes hos uenerantur,

1059 Pope Nicholas II threatened all vagrant monks with excommunication unless they returned to their monasteries. Within Normandy, the council of Caen in 1061 advised traveling abbots to stay in the vicinity of monasteries, to avoid giving public offense as vagrants. At Rouen in 1072 a council called for extensive effort to return fugitives to their monastery.²⁵

Leclercq describes a letter written by Bishop Marbode of Rennes to Robert of Arbrissel at some time between 1101 and 1117. Marbode criticized Robert along lines similar to Bolotin's censures. He complained of vagabondage, hypocrisy, preaching to crowds, and criticism of the clergy. Marbode complained also that Robert too readily recruited monks and nuns into his following.²⁶

Further evidence may be proposed from two of Ivo of Chartres' letters, and from a treatise on monastic life by Rainald the Hermit. Ivo was bishop of Chartres from 1091 to 1116. At some time during this period he addressed a letter to the monks of the Benedictine abbey of Coulomb within his diocese. Leclercq points out that these monks were troubled by the arguments of some who glorified a more ascetic lifestyle. These "innovators" also criticized the church hierarchy and complained of the abbey's tithes being diverted to the bishops. They attempted to persuade the monks to leave their monasteries.²⁷

Vulgus adorat, iam quasi sancti concelebrantur.

²⁵ Lackner 118-22.

²⁶ Leclercq, "Le poeme," 68-69.

²⁷ Leclercq, "Le poeme," 68.

Ivo's letter to these monks implies his awareness of actual cases of desertion of a monastery for a hermitage. His tone in responding to this situation may also imply something of the zealous conviction that impelled this flight. It is further worth noting that at this point he is apparently relying entirely on persuasion to deal with the situation. His letter includes no indication otherwise, while he is clearly making a serious attempt to persuade. If this approach was at all characteristic, it would have served to more easily allow the cases of desertion these sources report.

Ivo writes,

Let me make use of the words of the Lord: 'Behold, Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat.' (Luke 22) You have been driven from your senses by the beguiling oratory of certain individuals. These ones, puffed up with the leaven of the Pharisees, and not satisfied with the Lord's own grain, glory in the meagerness of their diet, and in not sparing their body. . . . They persuade monks to desert their monasteries . . . [and] to become Sarabaites, so that they may live in isolated spots according to their own individual law.

Ivo warns that this opens them up to many temptations, including that ". . . those who do not succeed in supplying their needs by the labor of their hands . . . while vanquished by want . . . preach that they may eat."²⁸ One might imagine some of the new converts to eremitism being impelled to preaching partly by this discovery of hardship.

²⁸ D. Ivo Carnotens Episcopus, Ep. 192, *Patrologiae* CLXII, 198-200: "Ut verbis Dominicis utar: Ecce Satan expetivit vos, ut cribraret sicut triticum (Luc. XXII), quia quorundam suasionibus a sensu vestro turbati estis, qui, pharisaico fermento inflati, non Dominico frumento impiguati, gloriantur in vilitate ciborum, et in non parcendo corpori. . . . suadent monachis ut monasteria sua deserant . . . an fieri Sarabaitas, ut in privatis locis proprio jure vivant."; 200-201: ". . . qui de laboribus manum necessaria sibi praeparare non sufficiunt . . . dum victi penuria . . . praedicant ut manducent. . . ."

Another of Ivo's letters is addressed to "Brother Rainald, professed at the Church of St John the Baptist."²⁹ Rainald's identity is not certain, though D. G. Morin believes him likely to have been a certain Angevin saint of local repute. Morin suggests that both dates, and the name of the community from which each of these figures is supposed to have fled, would fit. Variations on the name of this St Renaud include Rainaldus.³⁰

This Renaud is said to have left a community of Augustinian canons regular "in the abbey of Saint-John-of-the-Vineyards" at Soissons. This community was founded in 1076. Renaud was resolved to follow the example of Robert of Arbrissel, and sought out a hermitage in the forest of Craon. He later moved to the forest of Malinais in Anjou. There he built a modest sanctuary. He passed his remaining days among a community of his followers, and died in 1103 or 1104.³¹

Ivo's letter to Rainald attempts to persuade him to reverse his decision to become a hermit. Ivo's particular concern is that others will follow Rainald's example.

I tell you these things not to lecture you, but to recall to your mind how you should balance out the consideration of your own good, as you reach for perfection, lest you become a stumbling-block for the weak. For it is sometimes better to endure weaknesses than while attaining to the highest things yourself, to become a source of division among your fellows.³²

²⁹ D. Ivo Carnotens Episcopus, *Ep.* 256, *Patrologiae* CLXII, 262.

³⁰ D. G. Morin, "Rainaud l'ermite et Ives de Chartres: Un épisode de la crise du cénobitisme au XI^e-XII^e siècle," *Revue Bénédictine* 40 (1928): 113.

³¹ Morin 113-14.

³² Ivo, *Ep.* 262: "Haec dicens non te doceo, sed commonefacio uti bonum tuum ita dispenses, ut cum perfectioni intendis, ne fias scandalum infirmis, quia satius est aliquando infirma tolerare quam summa cum schismate facere"

Ivo's particular concern over Rainald's influence is further testimony to the occurrence of monastic desertions.

Rainald wrote a brief rebuttal of Ivo's arguments, as well as a longer treatise broadly criticizing current monastic life. His criticism focuses primarily on two major points. He argues that monks do not truly practice either asceticism or fraternal charity.³³ Within this discussion, Rainald's treatise is of particular interest as a piece of propaganda. Its wording demonstrates that it was intended to circulate among monks and persuade them to leave their monasteries.

Let those within the cloisters hear this, and understand it, and having understood, let them become terrified. Let them be terrified, I say, as hearers of the law, and not doers. By straining out the gnat, and gulping down the camel, those who are supposed to be guardians of claustral observance treat the Lord's precepts with contempt. . . . Jerome wrote to a monk named Rusticus [Rufinus?]: '. . . if you truly desire perfection, go out with Abraham from your own land, [and] naked, follow the naked Christ.' . . . This is the advice of Lanfranc to a certain monk who was thinking about leaving his monastery: '. . . I have been informed, brother, that you wish to depart from your monastery, but you are anxious because of your promise of stability If I, Lanfranc, had sworn an oath with my own hand not to depart from my monastery, but saw that I could not gain the salvation of my soul there, I would leave -- nor would I be guilty of perjury.' '. . . from among the sons of the devil, let him migrate to the sons of peace, of humility, of hope, indeed to the sons of God,' as the Apostle says. 34

³³ Rainaldus, "De vita monachorum," entire text presented in Morin, 104-110.

³⁴ Rainaldus 107-10: "Audiant hoc claustrales, et intelligant, et intelligentes expavescant. Expavescant, inquam, auditores legis, non factores, qui colando culicem, camelumque glutendo, claustrales observantias custodiunt, et domini praecepta contempnunt. . . . Ieronimus, ad monachum nomine Rusticum scribens . . . si vero perfecta desideras, exi cum Abraham de terra tua, nudus nudum Christum sequens. . . . Consilium Lanfranci ad quendam monachum consulentem de

The existence of such a document is in itself quite striking. One may suppose that such arguments might have played a significant role within the eremitic revival, if they circulated. Rainald's provision of an "authoritative" opinion in favor of breaking one's vow of stability must have spoken to a compelling source of concern for monks drawn to join this revival. Rainald's arguments also provide further evidence for the influence of the imitatio Christi, seen particularly as a call to poverty. In commenting on this treatise, Morin offers the observation that Rainald's citation of sources is unusually negligent and inexact.³⁵

Together, this evidence clearly suggests some flow of monastic personnel into the element of hermits and wandering preachers. The significance of this factor may perhaps be suggested by Bolotin's views on both the influence of the preachers, and their novel presentation of monastic learning to the populace. Accounts of the activities of Bernard of Tiron would tend to confirm this impression.

This suggestion may exemplify broader statements made by three scholars. Rosalind and Christopher Brooke state in Popular Religion in the Middle Ages,

monasterio reliquendo . . . ; Indicatum est mihi, frater, quia de tuo monasterio [F. 142v] vis recedere; sed sollicitus es de promissa stabilitate Si ego Lanfrancus manu propria me de monasterio non recessurum iurasset, viderem autem quod ibi animam salvare non possem, exirem, nec periurii reus essem. . . . a filiis diaboli migrat ad filios pacis, humilitatis, spei, immo <ad> filios Dei, dicente apostolo."
(Final two lines presented as of St Paul, not of Lanfranc.)

³⁵ Morin 110,

The 9th and 10th centuries witnessed the beginning of a great revival of the religious life. The monastic cloister was the centre of a deeply influential, deeply admired way of life . . . not in itself an expression of popular religion. Yet the monastic, ascetic life lay at the root of much which is fundamental in this book 36

Within an article on the origins of heresy, R. Morghen also suggests monastic asceticism as a source for popular versions of this ideal. He speaks of ". . . monastic asceticism, which now passed from the cloister to the peasant's farm, the merchant's store, and the artisan's workshop, peddled by the itinerant preachers of the eleventh century." Elsewhere, Morghen suggests that this opinion is based upon a study of Henry the Monk. "Monachism also exercised a very great influence on the most humble classes of the population, as M. Manselli has demonstrated in his book on Henry and the 'Henricians.'"³⁷

The evidence examined for northwest France suggests that monks were indeed spreading the monastic ideal of asceticism among the people of this area in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. However, this view should be tempered with the observation that the ideals the itinerant preachers spread were not strictly monastic. Not all of these preachers were monks. Also, the material presented suggests elements of originality and the influence of current trends.

My sources name four men who began wandering apostolates in the second decade of the twelfth century. Henry the Monk began his

³⁶ Rosalind and Christopher Brooke, Popular Religion in the Middle Ages: Western Europe 1000-1300 (London: Thames, 1984) 48.

³⁷ R. Morghen, "Problèmes sur l'origine de l'hérésie au Moyen Age," Revue Historique Juill.-Sept. 1966: 7-8, 15.

preaching in northwest France. His first known appearance was in Le Mans in 1116. Jeffrey Burton Russell states that ". . . he was a monk, possibly a Cluniac, and he was able to read and write." He entered Le Mans on Ash Wednesday,³⁸ A contemporary chronicler described him as imitating Christ by sending two disciples before him to announce his coming.

The man, determined on the infection of our fellow-citizens with his venomous breath, in imitation of the Savior dispatched before him to the bishop two of his disciples, like him in life and character. When they entered the outskirts of our city on Ash Wednesday, the whole population, eager for the wickedness offered them, received them as angels of the Lord of all. 39

Russell notes that the bishop "gave him license to preach a series of lenten sermons in the hopes that his eloquence might stir the conscience of the people,"⁴⁰ The chronicler mentions his courteous reception by the bishop, and his warm welcome by some of the clergy.

The pontiff . . . received them courteously . . . Although he had undertaken to go to Rome, he instructed his archdeacons, among other things, to grant to the pseudohermit Henry . . . peaceful entry and license to preach to the people. . . . Some of the clergy, led astray in his schism by quarrels and private donations, encouraged the rabble by their ranting and prepared a platform from which that demagogue

³⁸ Jeffrey Burton Russell, Dissent and Reform in the Early Middle Ages (Berkeley: U of California P, 1965) 68-69.

³⁹ "Henry at Le Mans," trans, from "Actus pontificum Cenomannis in urbe degentium," ed. G. Busson and A. Ledru (Archives historiques du Maine, II Le Mans, 1901) in Heresies of the High Middle Ages: Selected Sources Translated and Annotated, ed. Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans (New York: Columbia, 1969) 109.

⁴⁰ Russell 69.

might harangue the crowds of people who hung on his lips. Furthermore, when he addressed the people, these clerics sat weeping at his feet as he roared pronouncements like an oracle. 41

This reaction by some of the clergy is striking testimony to a certain climate of fervent piety. It recommends itself as background to the impulsion of some churchmen toward eremitism and itinerant preaching. Russell cites Raoul Manselli in noting that it was "not unusual for wandering preachers to offer their services as evangelists in this period."⁴²

However, Henry's sermons soon incited the populace to anticlerical violence. The chronicler gives little idea of precisely what Henry said of the clergy. He records a letter to Henry from a canon of the town which claimed, ". . . you have, as a public insult, called us and the whole clergy heretics."⁴³

Henry also apparently attempted to implement a program to have prostitutes married, somewhat reminiscent of Robert of Arbrissel's efforts. He proclaimed

. . . that no one in the future should receive gold, silver, property, or betrothal gifts with his wife, nor should she bring him a dowry, but the naked should marry the nude, the ailing the sick, the pauper the destitute. Nor was he concerned whether the chaste or the unchaste married. 44

After an unspecified period of time, the bishop returned and succeeded in expelling Henry from the town. Walter L. Wakefield and

⁴¹ "Henry" 110.

⁴² Russell 69.

⁴³ "Henry" 110-11.

⁴⁴ "Henry" 111-12.

Austin P. Evans note that after this, Henry traveled southward. He continued to preach, "and seems also to have moved into an openly heretical position in respect of some sacraments and of the Church's authority." They note that he was the probable target of the Council of Toulouse (1119). The third canon of this council excommunicates those who "attacked the sacraments of the Eucharist and baptism, disparaged the validity of priestly orders, and held errors about the conditions of legitimate matrimony."⁴⁵

Russell mentions that at some time between 1132 and 1135, Henry debated with a monk named William. This was probably William of Saint-Thierry. From a record of this debate, Henry is reported as believing that he no longer owed obedience to men, but only to God. God had given him a mission to preach, with a message "based upon the evangelical precept of love of neighbor." He also rejected infant baptism and the doctrine of original sin. He denied "all sacerdotal power to unworthy clergy." He saw the true church as those who obeyed the precepts of Scripture in apostolic simplicity. He further rejected the sacramental value of baptism, the necessity of the priestly function for absolution and marriage, and the usefulness of church buildings. He condemned the clergy for its pomp and luxury.⁴⁶

Russell states that after leaving Le Mans, Henry preached at Bordeaux, Poitiers, and elsewhere in southern France. He "attracted enough attention" that the archbishop of Arles had him arrested and brought before Pope Innocent II at the Council of Pisa in 1135. He

⁴⁵ Wakefield and Evans 107,

⁴⁶ Russell 46,

was condemned as a heretic, renounced his errors, and was ordered to a monastery. He obtained permission to leave and join the Cistercians. However, ". . . he never gained that refuge or, if he did, he quickly left it and returned to preach again in Provence." In 1145 he refused to debate publicly with Bernard of Clairvaux. ". . . Henry now disappears from history."⁴⁷

During his apostolate in southern France, Henry is believed to have come in contact with another heretical wandering preacher, Peter of Bruys. They would have met some time before Peter's death in 1132 or 1133. Wakefield and Evans state, ". . . shortly before Peter of Bruys died, he and Henry came into some kind of alliance." Russell explains that historians used to accept Henry as a disciple of Peter. Recently Manselli has emphasized Henry's independent contributions, but most historians still agree that Peter exerted some influence upon Henry. This is based partly upon the testimony of their contemporary opponents, especially Peter the Venerable.⁴⁸

According to Russell, Peter of Bruys had been a priest. He was probably from a village in the French Alps. He was expelled from his church for unknown reasons. Wakefield and Evans add that he began his itinerant preaching in the Alpine foothills east of the Rhône, in about 1112. Like Henry, he displayed a hermit's appearance. Russell notes that he denied the sacramental value of the eucharist, "doubted the authority of the Bible beyond the Gospels," and rejected prayers for the dead and the veneration of crosses. Like Henry, Peter rejected

⁴⁷ Russell 72-76; Wakefield and Evans 108.

⁴⁸ Russell 74-75; Wakefield and Evans 118.

the value of churches and the validity of infant baptism, as well as the general validity of the clergy and the sacraments. Unlike Henry, however, Peter did not deny original sin.⁴⁹

Shortly before Henry and Peter began their preaching, Tanchelm appeared in Flanders. Cohn states that there is some reason for believing that Tanchelm was a renegade monk. He was literate. Wakefield and Evans state that he "is now presented as probably a monk and a priest." Probably a native of Utrecht, in about 1110 he came from this diocese into Flanders. Here he was engaged by Count Robert II on a diplomatic mission to Rome. This having failed, and Robert having died in 1111, by 1112 Tanchelm was preaching in Brabant. Dressed as a monk, he denounced clerical abuses to crowds gathered in an open field.⁵⁰

Tanchelm became increasingly heretical. He also, according to his critics, became quite eccentrically megalomaniacal. He gained a wide following, centered in Antwerp. He apparently persuaded many people to stop going to church. He recruited a set of twelve disciples from a guild of blacksmiths. Critics also complained that he gained his following particularly through his influence on women. He was killed in 1115.⁵¹

While these three figures drifted into heresy, the final one to be mentioned remained orthodox. He was commissioned to combat Tanchelm's heresy. Little reports that Norbert of Xanten (c. 1080-1134)

⁴⁹ Russell 73-75; Wakefield and Evans 118.

⁵⁰ Wakefield and Evans 96-97; Cohn 46-47.

⁵¹ Russell 56-58; Cohn 47-50.

had been raised and educated within the household of the archbishop of Cologne. In his early thirties, he underwent a spiritual crisis. He found a counsellor in a local abbot. During the same period, the archbishop made him a deacon and a priest, and then a canon. He tried to reform his fellow canons. He also dressed simply and preached publicly, drawing a sympathetic popular response. However, in 1118 his colleagues had him reprimanded for usurping the office of preaching, not dressing and acting as a canon, and dressing as a monk without having taken vows. Norbert responded by resigning his prebend, selling his property, and giving the proceeds to the poor and to his friends the monks.⁵²

He then set off on a tour of itinerant preaching through Artois, Hainault, and Brabant. He took care to obtain papal permission first. While stressing poverty and a popular apostolate, he remained scrupulously orthodox. In 1134 he was called to Antwerp to win people back from Tanchelm's heresy. This remained strong despite Tanchelm's death. Norbert apparently undertook this mission with success. He had also, in 1120, begun the formation of the community of Prémontré by settling in a forest with a group of hermits. In 1121 they adopted the Rule of St Augustine. This remained a particularly austere order of canons. Little mentions that this order received formal organization in the early 1130's, and by the middle of the twelfth century included nearly 100 houses. Norbert ended as archbishop of Magdeburg, being named to this position in 1126.⁵³

⁵² Little 87-88.

⁵³ Little 87-90; Cohn 50; Tadeusz Manteuffel, Naissance d'une

As with the earlier itinerant preachers, it is particularly striking that all these figures came from within the church. It is also striking that three of those who began during this period moved so far toward entire rejection of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and sacramental practices. Russell's comment suggests that itinerant preachers were not uncommon at this time. Many of them apparently remained quite orthodox. Henry's original reception at Le Mans is consistent with this suggestion. Bolotin's comments also imply the existence of a number of anonymous preachers around 1130 in northern France, who were apparently favored by at least some churchmen in positions of authority.

These figures also continue to suggest ties to the eremitic revival, though none is specifically mentioned as preceding his preaching tour by a stay in the forest. The examples of Norbert and Tanchelm might suggest some greater tendency at this point to move directly into itinerant preaching.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Itinerant preaching appeared as a characteristic European phenomenon in the years around 1100. Its context was a general expansion in the lifestyle of voluntary poverty. This took shape primarily in the movements toward revival of the lifestyle of the hermit and the canon regular. Both these movements spread toward the end of the eleventh century, proliferating in a variety of forms. This spread of the ideal and lifestyle of voluntary poverty has been explained as either a reaction to the growth of a money economy, or the extension of the ideals of church reform. Additional factors may be suggested to more fully account for this phenomenon. Spiritual aspirations must certainly be considered, while positive social functions may also be proposed.

This proliferation in styles of poverty took on a particular character of experimentation, blending of aspects from different sources, and movement of individuals from one style of religious life to another. Traditional Benedictine monasticism was drawn into this milieu through contributing personnel and forms. As in the cases of Vallombrosa and Cîteaux, some tendency may also be seen toward adoption of elements of a new style into a modified version of the traditional style.

Benedictine monasticism may also be proposed as having provided

the basic model with which these styles reacted. It would have been the major repository of this value before the lifestyles of hermit and canon regular began to be revived. As these lifestyles were revived, they took on new forms. Some specific cases of borrowing from Benedictine monasticism are noted, particularly that by hermits of an adapted Rule of St Benedict. It may be suggested that the new styles both borrowed from, and reacted against, this traditional model. Hermits and canons tended to react against it in opposite directions. A view of new styles of religious life emerging promiscuously out of traditional monasticism is presented by the contemporary observer Pagan Bolotin. This tends to confirm the model being proposed.

Within this restless context the style of the itinerant preacher developed. The crusade preachers are the earliest figures mentioned as adopting this style. Robert of Arbrissel began his preaching in 1096, and was most likely influenced by their example. He is the first one mentioned to adopt this style as a permanent way of life, and preach a broader message. There are several indications that he was particularly influential. He is noted as the example for certain others, while the hermit Renaud is said to have been drawn from Soissons to the forests of northwest France by his reputation. He drew an admiring letter from one bishop, and condemning letters from at least two others. His monastic foundation grew "prodigiously." Zarnecki mentions that William of Malmesbury called him "the most famous and eloquent preacher of those times."¹ This may recommend Robert as a

¹ George Zarnecki, The Monastic Achievement, Library of Medieval Civilization (New York: McGraw, 1972) 92.

central source of inspiration in the spread of itinerant preaching.

Before adopting this style, Robert had acted as a priest and probably as a teacher. He had been educated at Paris, where he had also apparently become involved in the issues of church reform. Sources suggest for him prior evidence of skill at preaching, and perhaps a native penchant for wandering. In 1092 or 1095 he retired to a hermitage in the forest to dedicate himself to contemplation. He began attracting followers and formed them into a community of canons.

According to both of his Lives, Robert was given a commission to undertake public preaching by Pope Urban II. It was clearly a calling Robert took to. He preached widely in northwest France, and was joined by certain others in this. He took a particular interest in the underprivileged, forming his followers into monastic communities. As general sources of influence toward Robert's style, the imitatio Christi, the penitential pilgrimage, and the canon's emphasis on the "work of Martha" may be proposed.

Following Robert's beginning, several other figures are named as early itinerant preachers. The most striking characteristic they share in common is an origin within the church. The earliest figures worked with Robert and remained orthodox. In the second decade of the twelfth century, four other prominent figures are mentioned as beginning a wandering apostolate. Of these, three became heretical and the fourth was commissioned to combat heresy. However, there seem to have been a number of other preachers at this time who remained orthodox.

These figures also display common ties to eremitism. While earlier preachers emerged from the ranks of hermits, later ones display

the hermit's style. A particular condition for the development of itinerant preaching in northwest France was apparently a proliferation of hermits in the forests of this area. Contemporaries marked this pattern by calling them "false hermits," while Pagan Bolotin's poem satirized them for the seeming hypocrisy of their roles.

There is also convincing evidence that a number of monks and other regular religious left their communities to join this element of hermits and wandering preachers. This is of particular significance as a conduit for the spread of elements of monastic tradition among the populace. Bolotin suggests this point. There is some evidence for monks leaving their monasteries for the hermitage within the earlier eremitic revival in northern Italy. For northwest France, this pattern is evidenced by mentions of its occurrence by Geoffrey the Fat, Marbode of Rennes, and Ivo of Chartres. Of named itinerant preachers, Bernard, Henry, and probably Tanchelm had been monks. Géraud had been a regular canon. Vitalis and Norbert had also been canons, perhaps regular. Ivo of Chartres wrote one letter attempting to dissuade monks from their zeal toward the eremitic life, and another asking Rainald the Hermit to return to his community of canons so as not to set a bad example. Rainald himself wrote a treatise intended to circulate among monks and persuade them to leave their monasteries.

The earlier among these figures followed Robert's example, preaching with him in northwest France. In the second decade of the twelfth century, itinerant preachers appeared in southern France and the Low Countries. This raises the question of a relationship between

these developments. While Henry began in northwest France and then moved southward, the cases of Peter, Tanchelm, and Norbert do not indicate any specific influence from this area. Peter had begun his preaching before Henry. Further research is indicated into the development of itinerant preaching in these areas.

Limitations have also been placed on this attempt by my lack of access to German sources. Cohn notes that

Revolutionary movements of the poor, headed by messiahs or living saints . . . occurred with increasing frequency from the end of the eleventh century onwards. . . . So far as northern Europe is concerned, it is only in the valley of the Rhine that one can detect an apparently unbroken tradition of revolutionary millenarianism continuing down to the sixteenth century.

Cohn also indicates that popular preachers of the First Crusade were active along the Rhine.² He does not describe the activities of any "messiah" in the Rhineland during this initial period. However, it was in Cologne that Norbert was raised and became inspired to take up itinerant preaching. These suggestions may point to the Rhineland as another promising area in which to examine the development of this phenomenon.

The material which has been examined may also indicate further research along certain other lines. Primarily, the gathering of more extensive data on both hermits and itinerant preachers of this period could yield a fuller view of this phenomenon. The material presented hints at an evolution from orthodox toward more heretical messages.

² Norman Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford UP, 1970) 53,62.

This is a point which might be more closely examined. This material also points toward a closer examination of contributing conditions within the church at this particular point.

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